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THE LONDON COMEDY

THE LONDON COMEDY

INTERLUDES IN TOWN

BY

C. P. HAWKES



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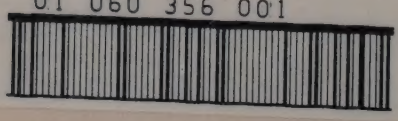
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TO
THAT SAGACIOUS CONNOISSEUR
OF LONDON LIFE & CHARACTER
THE CONSTABLE ON POINT DUTY
AT
HYDE PARK CORNER
THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED
WITH
DEFERENCE & HOMAGE

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JOHNSON : " No, sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life ; for there is in London all that life can afford."

Talking of London, he observed, " Sir, if you wish to have a just notion of the magnitude of this city, you must not be satisfied with seeing its great streets and squares, but must survey the innumerable little lanes and courts. It is not in the showy evolutions of buildings, but in the multiplicity of human habitations which are crowded together, that the wonderful immensity of London consists." I have often amused myself by thinking how different a place London is to different people. They whose narrow minds are contracted to the consideration of some one particular pursuit, view it only through that medium. . . . But the intellectual man is struck with it as comprehending the whole of human life in all its variety, the contemplation of which is inexhaustible.

Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

PALL MALL AND
PICCADILLY

THE COFFEE-ROOM WAITER

So poor old "Ten-bob Tenterden" was dead! The snuffy, taciturn, old gentleman who only three days ago had eaten his last dinner at that little table behind there by the fire, where, for more than fifteen years, he had taken his solitary meals; who never spoke except to state his meagre requirements, (he was reputed to live on half a crown a day); who shambled noiselessly about the club, and had established a sort of squatter's right to certain chairs in all the different rooms.

Sunk in a heavy humour, Warburton, waiter at the Pantheon Club, stood at the coffee-room window, and, musing on the old man's death, gazed with an unseeing, melancholy stare at the familiar pageant of Pall Mall.

From the time, now very long ago, when first he had donned the multi-buttoned jacket of a hall-boy, all Warburton's uneventful life had been spent in the service of the Pantheon, most reactionary of all great London clubs.

It was a survival of the gloomy mid-Victorian type of club. "All joy abandon ye who enter here" should have been written above its sombre portals. Its big hall-clock tolled the hours with the measured solemnity of a passing bell, while the cigar-lighters on either side the porter's box flickered lugubriously like candles round a bier from the shadow of which a mute in cerecloth livery distributed their letters to the mourners.

His reflections on the old member's death tinged the monochrome of Warburton's emotions



with a still deeper grey. He was nearing the age when, under the servants' pension-scheme, he would be superannuated upon the pittance therein prescribed. He was a married man with an only son, now a youth of twenty-three and employed in a motor business, with prospects of partnership had he but a little capital to bring in.

Warburton's wife had been for some fifteen years a bed-ridden invalid, and in payment of unavailing doctors' bills for her the last of his savings had long ago been swallowed up.

He knew he was growing old and slow and past his work, and had more than once recently caught meaning looks and whispered colloquies between the steward and the secretary, of which he was but too obviously the subject.

And now old Tenterden was gone,—found dead in bed the previous morning by the valet who had gone to call him.

For fifteen years the old man had lived in the club, which he had seldom left, seeming to have no friends. Warburton already missed him, for the two men had insensibly become parts of each other's lives, and the death of one left the other strangely desolate.

"Ten-bob Tenterden"—he had earned the sobriquet by the unvarying amount of his annual contribution to the servants' Christmas fund—had treated Warburton, who had always waited on him, with a sort of impersonal gruffness, obviously regarding him as part of the coffee-room furniture; except on an occasion during luncheon

some eight weeks before, when, after seeming unaccountably preoccupied, the old man had railed at him for some trivial omission in service with a sudden and unwonted ferocity.

Well, he was now at rest from worries, and Warburton half-envied him.

At this point in his embittered meditations a lifeless cinder fell from the fire into the ash-choked fender, rousing him from his reverie just as a page-boy entered from the hall.

"Warburton," said the urchin, "you're wanted in the secretary's orfice!"

Warburton's heart gave a despairing flutter.

So it had come at last—this was the end. Like the burnt-out ember, he must take his place at last among the extinguished ashes.

He passed hopelessly through the silently swinging doors.

"Wot yer been up to, Warburton?" inquired the cadaverous hall-porter. "The secretary's got Sir Samuel Semmitt with 'im in the orfice. Look, that's 'is car outside."

The name he mentioned was that of a very eminent solicitor indeed, senior partner of Semmitt and Semmitt, of Great Elborough Street. His photo (inset) was a familiar feature in the illustrated reports of every *cause célèbre*, and he was commonly supposed to carry beneath the brim of his immaculate silk hat secrets enough to hang half London.

To Warburton the great man's visit presented no significance, except that it might delay a little

his own fateful interview with the secretary, outside whose office-door he waited with the impassiveness of the disciplined servant. The murmur of an indistinct duet was perceptible from within.

Someone coughed in the hall; an ascending lift moaned in the distance.

Presently the door opened, and the secretary, in a reassuring voice, called Warburton. "Sir Samuel would like a word with you," he said, and, passing out, left the astonished waiter, lost in unutterable conjectures, alone with the great solicitor.

The senior partner of Semmitt and Semmitt, a bird-eyed elderly man with lavish hair like white floss-silk, sat at a table on which some documents lay spread.

Warburton waited with a bewildered immobility, wondering what on earth this super-attorney could have to say to him.

"Pray be seated, Mr.—ah—Warburton!" began the lawyer in a deep cooing voice which sounded as though it were mellowed by much luxurious food and rare old wines.

"I am here," he continued, "with reference to the estate of my late client, Mr. Theodore Tenderden, whom you have known as a resident-member of this club for many years.

"As you are doubtless aware, he died two days ago with—ah—distressing suddenness. He had but recently executed his will—to be precise, he did so in my office, about midday, just eight weeks ago."

(Warburton *almost* started.)

"I had previously taken his instructions, and, though he was physically feeble, I can affirm that his mental faculties were unimpaired. He was a wealthy man, Mr.—ah—Warburton; though it was his foible to exhibit in his person and habits but little indication of that fact."

Warburton listened with an air of puzzled detachment as Sir Samuel went on: "Forty years ago he had had the good fortune to acquire, almost accidentally, some property in what has since become the most valuable part of the city of Melbourne, in—ah—Australia. This he subsequently sold at an exceedingly handsome profit, and returned to live in England."

Sir Samuel looked for a moment at his diamond ring, a present from a grateful client whom he had snatched from the very jaws of the Public Prosecutor, and resumed: "Mr. Tenterden for many years led an ascetically simple life, and his expenditure was infinitesimal. The consequent accumulations of his income were, from time to time, invested, on—ah—our advice, extremely profitably; and he died possessed of a considerable fortune."

Here the lawyer peered at his still imperturbable auditor.

"A childless widower of long standing," he continued, "Mr. Tenterden had no close blood-relatives, and was not on good terms with his distant connections. Moreover, he was a man of a peculiar temperament."

Warburton sighed in mournful reminiscence.

"Until he recently instructed me, he had always refused to make a will, and he had strongly individual ideas about the disposal of his fortune, resenting any suggestion of dictation in that regard. At our last interview he told me that he had observed you closely during a long period of time, and had been at some pains, unknown to you, to inform himself upon your private affairs."

Here Sir Samuel lowered his voice to an impressive undertone. "Under his will the residue will amount to upwards of sixty thousand pounds. This, my dear sir, I am happy to inform you, Mr. Tenterden desired to leave absolutely to you, as sole residuary legatee. Permit me to offer my felicitations!"

Warburton stood quite still, two thoughts beating in his brain like sledge-hammers.

His wife! She should be well! The most consummate and expensive medical treatment should effect her cure!

His son! He should buy the business! Should be a leader of his trade!

The room seemed suffused with a great flood of light; the figure of Sir Samuel dwindled and receded before the splendour of its radiance.

In his tumultuous feelings the personality of his dead benefactor was swept aside as a mere instrument of Divine beneficence. His impulse was to throw himself on his knees and shout his overwhelming gratitude to Heaven!

But the habitudes of a lifetime of subservience

asserted their quiet dominion over his emotions, affording a rock of refuge to which he clung, dizzy and breathless, after his sudden immersion in such incalculable seas of happiness.

The great hall-clock tolled One: from the distant coffee-room he heard the faint clatter of crockery; the air became redolent of kitchen-odours: from the pantry overhead sounded swift hurrying footsteps and the pop of corks.

He must finish the last day's work that he would ever do, and then slip home, unnoticed, to tell them of this miracle.

Backing a little towards the door, and scarcely looking up, he answered the lawyer in the same low even tone that he had used to old Tenterden for so many years as he sat at the small round table by the coffee-room fire. He said: "*Will that be all, Sir?*"

TOPPERS

AT lunch-time in the halls of any London club you shall now see more silk hats in five minutes than in a week at Westminster—where once the “Topper” took an honoured place in the momentous procedure of our legislation,—or, indeed, elsewhere, save only during the season, at Lord’s or Ascot or in Hyde Park.

“The English,” said a French cynic, “have fifty religions, but only one sauce”; and, had he spoken of the half-century preceding the War, he might have added—“and only one hat”—the Top-hat; which in itself was almost a religion, or, at any rate, the symbol of a system of social ethics essentially and characteristically English.

At its zenith in the 'eighties, it typified the psychology and atmosphere of late Victorian society; its rise accompanied the stately progress of that golden epoch, when ideals and hats were high and the income-tax was low, and it crowned the leonine heads of most of the giants whom Dean Inge places a little lower—and Mr. Lytton Strachey a great deal lower—than the angels.

If Tennyson and Darwin never wore topplers, Disraeli and Gladstone, Huxley and Matthew Arnold—and even Swinburne—did; and the associations of the “silk-hat standard” still influence the plethoric reading public of to-day.

“You must read Bennett’s new novel!” I recently heard one “general reader” thus admonish another. “Who’s Bennett?” was the rejoinder; and straight the answer came—“Oh, the man

who writes about the Five Towns—*Lincoln*, you know, and all that!”

The gradual resurrection in public favour of the “stove-pipe” hat since 1919 is one of the most significant and favourable indications of the ultimate restoration to a distracted body-politic of peace and happiness, if not of the other four cognate virtues.

When the barometer, political or meteorological, warns us that conditions are likely to be “stormy,” top-hats are left at home; but a rising glass, “set-fair” in either sense, produces the blocking-iron and smoothly-bristled brush.

For the top-hat, like its protector the umbrella, is essentially an emblem of peace,—especially the “white” top-hat of a paradoxical but dove-like grey,—and is in direct antithesis to the Phrygian cap of Revolution or the iron helmet of War; though Picton wore a defiant “topper” up to the last of Waterloo, and the white beaver of “Garibaldi’s Englishman” inspired the Thousand at Calatafimi as effectively as did the white charger of Sant’ Iago the armies of Castile. By the sumptuary traditions of Scotland, too, the top-hat is an indispensable item of the peaceful Sabbath garb known among Scots—always a logical people—as “a guid stan’ o’ black.” But when Winter came in 1914, the withering blast of the guns blew the “topper,” like many other seemingly immutable conventions, from its apparently inviolable security.

Throughout the bleak years of war it hiber-

nated, stowed away in cupboards or on the topmost shelves in hatters' shops; and when, in 1919, the doors of the Janus Temple at Versailles were at long last "banged, barred, and bolted,"—or so we were informed,—and our helmets (shrapnel) became—or so we hoped—unwarlike hives for bees, the top-hat emerged, tentatively at first and almost furtively, by night and as an opera-hat. Quietly and annually, however, it regained assurance till at last in 1921 it showed itself bravely, not in single spies, but in well-brushed battalions, in the full daylight of that glorious summer.

"A white-hat summer," so my hatter described it; adding that those of his trade who had retained a stock of top-hats, white or black, throughout the War, had been derided as insane.

Yet there is method even in a hatter's madness, and, during the intervening lustrum, the "topper" has reasserted itself upon the head of every man who, by his appearance at least, lays claim to be considered "someone."

The menace of the proletarian "Trilby," which was to nationalize our bulging brain-bins in the interests of a soft-hatted and softer-headed socialism, has failed.

Instead of participating in the rages of politicians and the vain imaginings of publicists, let us take heart of grace and notice gratefully the tranquil and reassuring abundance of top-hats which has signalized each London season during the last six years.

Among the rhododendrons in the Park, in the paddock at Ascot or on "the mound" at Lord's, and even on the Terrace at Westminster, statesmen, stockbrokers, barristers, and the "stars" in every firmament, social and professional, have (with a change of metaphor) rehoisted this signal of halcyon weather; and even ecclesiastics have discarded the gloomy agnosticism of "black felts" in favour of the "topper's" calm and canonical serenity. As to politicians, a leading Labour member—only an "intellectual," it is true, but with shrewd discernment of public tendencies in politics and headgear,—recently set the quidnuncs of St. Stephen's whispering by his appearance on the Opposition benches adorned with a glossy top-hat, binding his brows as it were with the phylacteries of confidence and regeneration. The head that wears a topper may have been bloody, but it is unbowed; for it is conscious that its unruffled headpiece has survived Armageddon, and victoriously remains the outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual constancy to traditional ideals which in this country will ever drive your Bolshevik to despair.

THE LITTLE SOUNDS

SOMEWHERE in the neighbourhood of the Trastevere in Rome there is a church with a campanile whose clock sounds the hours with identically the same note and timbre as that of St. James's, Piccadilly. When first I heard its chimes they obliterated for me the Eternal City, and as their notes reverberated in my ears I was transported back as though by magic to the clangorous gloom of the London streets, and could almost hear the clattering taxis, the racket of motor-buses and the sullen yelp of newsboys.

Kipling has written somewhere well and with truth on smells and their associations: he describes how even to the most unimaginative of noses the sudden sensing of a certain smell will cause the present and its circumstances to vanish, and, even if only for the minutest fraction of a second, will recall to the percipient some scene or personality indelibly connected in his mind with that particular scent.

So, surely, is it with sounds. I don't mean Music, the air of a particular song, the thrum of a guitar, or the full resonance of orchestra or organ; but intimate small particular sounds, the creak of a pair of boots, the small chink-chink of a pendant coin against a watch-chain, a mere habitual cough, the ring of the ferrule of a cane or umbrella, the minatory boom of a hall-clock, or the familiar chimes, like those of St. James's, Piccadilly, which graduate the Londoner's day.

So must the tap-tap of a stick on a frozen road have often momentarily revived for Jim Hawkins

the terror of that nocturne in the dim-lit parlour of the Admiral Benbow Inn, his mother's fear-struck face, the dead buccaneer sprawled on the floor with the Black Spot by his side, and the menace of the blind beggar's tapping crutch and stealthy fumbling hand on the latch outside.

Usually, as in Jim's case, such little sounds have registered themselves upon the memory in the days of childhood, in the well-remembered nursery or the familiar class-room redolent of ink and the faint odour of the verbs in $\mu\iota$.

The creak of boots inevitably conjures up in my recollection the soft but ponderous tread and stertorous breathing of our old nurse on her nightly "visiting rounds" to the darkened night-nursery, before she retired to her own well-earned slumbers; her hands full of the "mending" which was her unceasing evening task; her quiet but heavy footfall punctuated by the comfortable creak of her broad and soft-soled slippers; the little sighs or restless movements of the children, and the quiet recording tick of the nursery clock heard through the door ajar.

It even recalls the taste of her chocolate, elastic through long keeping in a vase on the nursery chimney-piece, and warm from contact with that loving old hand; a bar of sticky sweetness which was her unfailing remedy for, and not infrequently the reason of, our premeditated insomnia.

Similarly, at the sound of deglutition from a flask, I see again the mathematical class-room at

my private school, and watch the sunlight dancing on the wall to the uneasy scratching sound of nibs in labour.

I see old P * * * * the mathematical master, his head bald as an egg—the storage of mathematical roots within seemed to have sterilized the capillary roots just underneath its surface—his glasses on his Falstaffian nose as he takes a rapid survey to assure himself that the class is fully occupied with the solution of the problem set; and then come his opening of the broad lid of his desk and unmistakable sounds from behind its cover of the unscrewing of the cap of a pocket-flask and of the hasty absorption of its pungent contents.

Kindly old mathematician, scholar, and gentleman! it was his one failing, and possibly the cause of his presence there amongst us.

A wrangler and prizeman at twenty and an usher at sixty, his personality will never be forgotten by the boys he loved and, loving, chastened as a sign of it.

And then what blissful hours return at the blessed sound of a lawn-mower at work! Sun—trees—cricket—bathing in the dappled waters of the foliage-shaded river, and ever to the accompaniment of the drowsy whirr of the machine, drawn by the decrepit pony with “boxing-gloves on its feet” the last of whose life-work that duty was, and steered by the old groundsman in his wide straw sombrero and incongruously-patched breeches.

School memories lead onward to the University. The clinking of its stopper on the glass rim

of a decanter conjures up the imperious image of my stately "gyp" at Cambridge, Mr. Augustus William Pottinger; whose dignified bearing served but to conceal, from those who knew him not, the internal evidence of his "little failing," which was the same as had been that of poor old P * * * * .

Invariably fuddled after five o'clock p.m., he yet was the master of his actions, the captain of his head and legs; and his demeanour betrayed no outward and visible sign of his inward and spirituous gracelessness. It was only when he waited at some undergraduate dinner-party that his careful corking-up of the decanters, and his unavailing efforts to fit their glass stoppers into the unaccommodating necks of empty bottles, disclosed his secret to the hitherto incredulous observer.

The chink of iron quoits recalls hours spent in later years in a regimental orderly-room, wrestling with returns and *memos* while care-free Atkins played his game and nimble "tanners" changed their owners, upon the strip of quoit-ground near the canteen across the square.

While the squeak of the metal of a trousers-press, newly loaded and screwed-up to the necessary tautness, calls up for me the figure of a very gallant Gentleman, one of the last of the real soldiers of fortune, who once occupied an adjacent cabin on a certain voyage.

Born out of his time, he was a true survival and worthy specimen of all that gallant company of Gentlemen-adventurers which slashed its way

through History from the brave days of Sir John Hawkshaw of the *Condottieri* and John Smith the Great, down to those of Harry Maclean, last Kaïd of the *Mehallah* of Abd-ul-Aziz, Sultan of Morocco.

He counted service under as many potentates and powers as he had fingers and toes. Wherever there was promise of a "scrap," thither his war-path led. Mexico, Madagascar, Morocco, New Guinea, and all the countries of the near East had been his happy fighting-grounds and had notched their successive scars upon him; till the end came, when Death found him leading his company in the New Army at its fiery baptism on the Somme.

Whithersoever Fate led him he repaired, dressed always as befitted the enterprise and with perfection, and shaved and groomed to an amazing nicety however disadvantageous the circumstances. The trousers-press had developed its squeak through many years and in many climes; in haversacks and kit-bags slung across the backs of mules, camels, and llamas, and even, it was said, of yaks. One wonders what became of it after the Boche machine-gunner left it ownerless at last in Delville Wood.

So might the theme be developed *ad infinitum*: the little sounds have to each one of us their significance in recollection. To how many in a now short-memoried world will they serve to call to mind those who in the five years' agony of the greatest of all wars responded to the summons of their country, and passed overseas as soldiers to

her armies or as sailors to her fleets, until at last dispersed by Death the great demobilizer?

Their memory lives for ever in our minds in the small intimate sounds which for a second almost can recall their presence.

“SENHOR,” remarked my Portuguese friend, Dr. Thiago Joaquim Martinho, as we floundered about one afternoon in the witch’s cauldron that once was Oxford Circus, surrounded by all the seeming evidence of seismic upheaval—yawning chasms where once had been friendly buildings, and quivering eddies of pedestrians in a maelstrom of motor-buses which swept round eyots of lethargic workmen somnolent on the debris of former highways,—“Senhor, what you want here in London is a Pombal.” Now, my friend, a graduate in Arts of Coimbra, is an architect, and, furthermore, lives in Lisbon: so that he spoke from knowledge, from daily observation, and from qualified experience in the practice of his profession.

And certainly the condition of London since the War resembles what must have been that of Lisbon after the great earthquake in 1755, but without the inspiring influence of the great Portuguese reformer. Great seemly thoroughfares such as Regent and Oxford Streets, which for a century have preserved the indefinable quality and atmosphere peculiar to London, have been demolished piecemeal in a succession of minor earthquakes. The graceful walls of Regency and Georgian buildings have fallen in with their leases, and the once-exquisite rhythm of the West End streets has been broken and jarred by overelaborate manifestations of the showy tastelessness and chaotic imaginations of modern architects; miscellaneous and divergent in style, lacking in all the artistic virtues, and symbolical of

nothing but the worst tendencies of a selfish and sordid commercialism. The defacing of Waterloo Place and the Quadrant is the most blatant example of this architectural infamy: it is as though some cheapjack dentist had extracted at haphazard the most perfect teeth in the level precision of poor Nash's gums, and inserted in the bleeding gaps a number of sham molars set in incongruous gilding!

How different might have been the result if the reconstruction of post-War London had been planned and directed by the artistic autocracy of a Pombal, the single and arbitrary, but æsthetic authority of an artist in architecture, with untrammelled powers such as those with which the great Marquis was clothed by the King whose personality he so completely eclipsed. Sebastiao José de Carvalho e Mello, Marquez de Pombal (his very style and title is redolent of a harmonious dignity!) was a man of an intellectual dominance, an exquisite taste, and a practical force of will outstanding even in a century prolific in supermen. Secured by such qualities in absolute command over the confidence of his Sovereign and his fellow-citizens, out of the ruined magnificences of Joannine Lisbon—devastated by the historic catastrophe which is comparable only with the great upheaval at San Francisco and the recent calamity in Japan,—Pombal raised a new city which still holds its place among the most consistently beautiful and best-constructed of European capitals. The personality of this great man

is best described as an admixture of those of Wren and Mussolini. As in the case of Wren, his architectural genius was a by-product of other and incongruous activities, and the same freakish Fate that made a Savillian Professor of Astronomy the creator of London's imperishable architectural treasures, decreed that a Portuguese Prime Minister and ex-Ambassador at the Court of St. James's should create a school of architecture which still expresses the latent spirit of the place and people for whose benefit it was designed.

But Pombal was more fortunate than Wren in freedom from interference with his plans. He was omnipotent, and his intrepid zeal, his exactitude and method, were given full and enviable scope. He drafted plans for the rectangular regulation of streets and avenues, the uniform height and symmetry of buildings in harmony with the contours of the ground and the amenities of their surroundings, the adequate provision of fountains and open spaces, and the successful exploitation of unrivalled natural advantages. And his orders were executed with as much celerity and precision as those of Haussmann in Paris ninety-eight years later, but with much less expense. And, in parenthesis, a fund of some £49,000 was raised in the City of London to assist him with the cost of housing and reconstruction.

As to the parallel between him and Mussolini, it would be more complete if the *Duce* were to break out in a fresh place, and to decree the demolition of most of the architectural abominations

of modern Italy which now desecrate the seven eternal hills, and to order the erection, in strict accordance with his own plans, of a new Rome which should worthily perpetuate the sublime grandeur of the Cæsars' capital. Otherwise, in their methods and mentalities, there is a striking similarity between the two. Though one is the son of a blacksmith and the other was an aristocrat, both might be described as patriotic egotists. To Pombal, as to Mussolini, his country's welfare depended on the supremacy of his own executive power. He alone, if unimpeded, could raise it from the depths in which it had been submerged by the faction and venal incompetence of his predecessors. For Pombal was a tyrant: his methods of harshness and severity were those of Fascism; but they enabled him to liberate his country from economic bondage and priestly domination, to break the terror of the Inquisition and expel the Jesuits, to reorganize the Army and found a system of national education, to revitalize colonial enterprise, and to consolidate the old alliance with Great Britain.

The artistic and utilitarian success of Pombaline Lisbon is noteworthy, however, from the standpoint of the modern Londoner, because it was the outcome of a single competent authority; which insisted on a gracious uniformity adapted to the evolution of a harmonious whole, as distinct from the dictates of individual caprice or merely selfish business requirements. Efficiency was combined with beauty, and, although Pombal—like Wren—

had the inestimable advantage of having to build a city almost *de novo*, the general principles of concordant form and design which he applied to the construction of each particular building might well be adopted by our London authorities, who so complacently ignore the present devastation of their city's most characteristic beauties.

But a combination of political, civic, and artistic capacity such as Pombal possessed occurs only rarely in European history. In London our tangled system of municipal administration forbids its culture.

Co-ordination of the various authorities, even in such matters as street planning and road repairs, would seem to be impossible. The futile wrangling of architects, railway companies, and civic corporations over the question of the bridges between St. Paul's and Westminster, and all the immense architectural and traffic possibilities which are therein involved, fills the loyal Londoner's mind with terror and misgiving. After a five years' experience of post-War renovation he gloomily envisages incongruous pontine combinations of the new County Hall, the Piccadilly Hotel, and the unsightly super-cinemas in the Strand.

In London, self-conscious architects continue the work of desecration to the orders of tradesmen whose minds are warped by an insensate lust for advertisement at all costs, regardless of the possibilities of a more gracious uniformity. The fine perspective of Oxford Street is incongruously punctuated by massive dry-goods stores preten-

tiously camouflaged as sham Greek temples, and the sloping vistas of Piccadilly and St. James's Street are confused by a lamentable incoherence of bastard styles, each item in which, designed with a view to isolated and insistent impressiveness, achieves a mere vulgar and repellent banality. Over-decorated façades, with a massive futility of pillars upholding nothing and based apparently on a fragile foundation of plate-glass and *lingerie*, make Bond Street ridiculous ; while even Gilbert's fountain in Piccadilly Circus is to be made to "pass further up, please," at the hustling behest of the Tube railway-man ; and it has been left to an American to complete the fine linear sweep of Kingsway with a worthy *dénouement*. London, as an architectural entity, has ceased to be true to itself, and its streetscapes have lost the unique atmosphere of self-expression which they once possessed. The West End emulates the blatant restlessness of Broadway, and vies in tawdry vulgarity with Coney Island.

To show him vestiges of the simple classicism, the sonorous yet intimate consistency that once existed, I had to take my Portuguese architect to Regent's Park, to the Adelphi, and to the derelict Squares of Bloomsbury and beyond. And, even in these neighbourhoods, I found in progress a stealthy obliteration of the architectural features which once lent to London as distinctive a character as is still to be seen in Edinburgh or Bath,—symbolical of our national aptitude for harmony and a tranquil orderliness.

But such evidence of a vanished and appropriate beauty seemed only to depress my Portuguese architect the more.

“Senhor,” he repeated, paradoxically, and with a despairing gesture, “nothing will save your London but destruction . . . destruction by earthquake, . . . some vast convulsion of Nature which will engulf your County Councillors, your shopkeepers, your architects and Committees, and perhaps produce—a Pombal!”

WESTMINSTER

FOR upwards of four centuries the Doges of Venice, officiating from a seagoing altar upon the fo'c's'le of the *Bucentaur*, annually married their city to the Sea,—a spouse who, in the long run, proved unfaithful.

London, though separated by a greater geographical distance from the other contracting party, has been for ever bound in similar wedlock; but her vows, eternally irrefragable, stand in no need of such mistrustful reiteration.

No Londoner who, like all true Cockneys, loves the sea, need languish with *nostalgie-de-mer* if, during August, for reasons of business or necessity, he be left forlorn in Town, deserted by friends and family on their holiday-migration to the beach or seaside links.

For in London, which is not really an inland Capital, one never quite loses contact with the sea, though to many its call may be inaudible, its immanence invisible.

London is still impregnated with tar and spin-drift, saturated with salt water; as she has ever been since her primal days, when St. James's Park was the bed of a tidal estuary and Roman galleys churned the shoals of the lagoon, an archipelago of eyots, which once divided *Augusta* from the Surrey hills.

The breath of the sea, persistent and irresistible, always blows through London; and along some sixty miles, as far as London Bridge, the flood of her river carries to her every day a vital salt elixir, the potent influence of which permeates

all her atmosphere and history. From Hammer-smith to The Mouse, the inscrutable and unceasing passion of the Tide links London with the infinite mystery of greater waters. In fair weather and foul,—alike when the easterly Summer breezes fan the flood and the westerly gales of Winter howl through the bridges, scattering flocks of sea-fowl refugees and urging the ebb with the fierce impatience of an offshore wind,—the daily miracle of the Tide produces a palpable sense of the sea, fundamental to the character of London and to the souls of its inhabitants.

When left behind during a London August no disconsolate straggler from the holiday crowd, if resident, say, in the Temple or the Adelphi, need feel himself as hopelessly marooned inland. He can escape the bonds of circumstance, the arid prisoning of bricks and mortar, if he will but take a walk outside his garden or his terrace-railings between the bridges of Blackfriars and Waterloo. He need not journey down-stream past the Tower, where tall ships still dispel all doubt of the sea's propinquity, and the gabble of Dago seamen is sentient with suggestions of Ibañez, with implications of indigo Southern waters and Spanish girls with faces like pale blossoms; and where the sight of swarthy Lascars conjures in the imagination, like a page of Conrad's, the hum of tropic jungles and the tortuous mysteries of dim bazaars. No need to go so far: a love of blue water and a modicum of the imaginative faculty shall work the miracle for him in a nearer and more prosaic

neighbourhood. Let him but walk the Embankment near the Temple steps and he shall find his sea-legs in a minute.

Here, within a stone's throw of the Tube, the Courts, the Restaurants and Theatres, lies spread an illimitable range of sea-suggestion. It is true that no glittering skyline bisects the prospect, but as he leans upon the parapet of the river wall (as who should say a taffrail), and hears the slap and suck of the heaving waters at its foot, he may glimpse to the eastward the white towers of Barry's bridge, finite and brilliant in the sunlight as the chalky brows of cliffs. On his left, below the Temple gardens, a sloop lies chafing at her moorings,—the *President*, drill-ship of the R.N.V.R.; her bows parting the stealthy current as though she were "carrying-on" under a press of sail, while the breeze croons through the rigging of her swaying masts, their creaking tackle frosted with London smuts as though with brine. And just beyond, passing her port-to-port, a bluff-bowed barge is dropping down on the ebb, with a rag of canvas set on the little mast stepped forward.

Small restless row-boats bob and dance to their buoys,—just as, at this moment, their little sisters are doing all over the world in wider waters: Malay *proas* on the shimmering swell off Surabaya, or *prams* on the sullen surges of Norwegian fjords;—while a motor-launch fusses against the tide to Westminster, as it might be a yacht's dinghy panting shorewards for cabin-stores.

The opposite shore, with gay-sterned barges careened on its mud-banks like buccaneering barques on the slime of some West Indian Cay, presents a fantastic background. A ridge of roofs and tapering chimneys, of high-storied repositories chromatic with posters of carmine, blue, and cobalt; and a lower fringe of weather-beaten warehouses and wharves suggesting the quayside of some old and tarry Port, the haunt of teak-faced shellbacks lounging against stanchions of old ship's timber, one eye on the weather and the other on the half-open door of the Clipper Inn whence rolls the rhythm of some deep-sea chanty such as the saga of "Reuben Ranzo," that luckless "Skipper of a sugar-drogher," with its imprecatory refrain—"Hell to your soul, is it *tea* that you want?"

The very bell of a passing tramcar sounds through the din of the Embankment traffic with a clear minatory resonance, as though struck by some alert taut-handed quartermaster, intent on making it heard through the thunderous rattle of wind-driven canvas; and pigeons from the Temple Gardens, white in the bleaching sunlight, flutter like kittiwakes over the undulating lustre of the tide. The bridges, the buildings, the flaunting sky-signs, seem to be merely adventitious detail in a landscape full of sea-suggestion, to wear an aspect of trivial impermanence, like the tawdry architectural excrescences of some "Marine Parade."

Our holiday-laggard will surely feel that the sea

shares London with him, and that he need never fear the jading claustrophobia that he would feel in other inland cities. Though tied to Town he can yet inhale the essential atmosphere of the sea, the consoling breath of openness and freedom, of wide horizons and salt latitudes, that ever stirs the sea-hunger in every true citizen of our great maritime metropolis; itself a vast accumulation of sea-history stored on the banks of its mighty tidal river, over the face of whose waters Emprise and the High Adventure, like the Spirit of God, will move for ever.

ADVENT IN THE ABBEY

FROM high in the fretted vaulting the shafts of pale winter sunlight slant faintly downwards, powdering corbel and architrave with misty gold ; and suggesting to the imagination the celestial ladders which the Royal Founder beheld, like Jacob, in a vision, rearing their height to Heaven from St. Peter's Isle of Thorns,—the site of his future Abbey,—with an angelic company moving in glorious radiance up and down their rungs.

The great rose window glows with rich crimsons and pellucid purples, and the illuminant fingers of the fading light irradiate the outlines of the statuary in "Statesmen's corner" ; as though, like the man depicted on the Bayeux tapestry,—who stands on the roof resting one hand upon the Palace tower of Westminster, while with the other he grasps the wind-vane of St. Peter's Abbey,—they wished to emphasize the relation of the sacred to the secular building, and thus to symbolize the intertexture of Church and State in the historical fabric of our Constitution.

And here some worshippers, half-hidden in the shadows of sculptured history, sit facing a corner of the choir ; which, denuded of ornament, is all the more impressive in its austere Adventual humility, its simple and mystic plainness of snowy surplices and glimmering candlelight ; and in the angle the sound of the chanting and the organ-notes reaches the listeners' ears as from a muting distance.

The semi-isolated fragment of the congregation assembled near "Statesmen's corner" seems

almost incongruous in its varied composition. Some few are here to pray; and there are little groups of girls and boys in watchful charge of governesses and nurses, mixed with a score of others who are obviously habitual attendants at these services. But most are sightseers, English and foreign,—including a pair of turbaned Indians,—who are presumably “doing” the Abbey as part and parcel of their London pilgrimage: while at the back there sits a trio of girl-clerks or shop-assistants, giggling and whispering beneath their tight *cloche* hats.

Others there are who have frankly come as music-lovers, and mainly to listen to the Anthem; and these hurry out with an unfitting lack of reverence at its close, for all the world as though the Abbey were but another Albert Hall. From time to time one of them moves creakily up the aisle, intent on some better listening-place: and it is noteworthy that but few attempt to join in the congregational singing, though, during the chanting by the choir alone, many wear a look of rapt attention which may be devotional, but smacks suspiciously of the concert-room. The volume of harmony reverberates from side to side of the choir, now near, now far away; a rivulet of sound when the trebles sing alone, then sonorously swelled by the fuller flood of the basses and organ. Many of the congregation join in the Creed, and not a few in other spoken portions of the service; and among them is the usual elderly lady—so well-known to every parish churchgoer,

—who makes the wrong responses with a fervent but misplaced confidence. And then the organist softly plays the prelude to the Anthem, while late arrivals are shepherded by vergers toward still vacant places, into which they rustle just as the organ's murmur blends with a boy's clear alto, and both merge presently into the full chorus of the choir, and the resulting unison seems to fill the whole echoing area of the Abbey. After the last whispered undertone of the *Amen*, there follows a brief silence that seems to numb the senses and at last is broken by the departing patter of the feet of those who find themselves unwilling or unable to stay for the final prayers; and then the short service comes to an end with the usual blessing. Some of the congregation linger at the rail which divides the aisles from the choir, in order, apparently, to stare at the retreating choristers and clergy. Others still huddle in "Statesmen's corner," glancing at the inscriptions graven on the monuments. And it may interest, at any rate, the turbaned tourists to read of "Clemency Canning"—first Viceroy of India and Governor-General during the Mutiny—that "in that high office and throughout that perilous crisis his conduct justly entitled him to the lasting gratitude of his country." Or from the delightful tribute to Duchess Margaret, wife of the "loyall Duke of Newcastle," they may learn that the fireside virtues have their place even among such memorials of pomp and power. For of her it is here recorded that "she came of a noble

familie in which all the brothers were valiant and all the sisters virtuous"; and further, that "she was a wise, witty and learned lady, which her many books do testify, and a most virtuous, loving wife." Others, again, wander to the south transept, where, hard by "Poets' corner," lies the *protégé* of another and a later Duchess,—John Gay; who must lie happy in the knowledge that a revival of his most famous play was the rage of London nearly two centuries after his burial there; while the shade of Sheridan, whose dust lies close to the Shakespeare statue, may share with him this gratification. And the little Cockney *midinettes* who yawned in "Statesmen's corner" will surely be interested in the tomb of lovely Mistress Nance Oldfield, the actress, who rests near Congreve,—another "Lyric" playwright of the 18th century,—and whose dying moments as described by Pope witness how little alteration Time can make in feminine psychology.

*So let a charming chintz and Brussels lace
Wrap my cold limbs and shade my lifeless face:
One would not, sure, be frightful when one's dead;
And, Betty, give this cheek a little red.*

The less-known and humbler memorials there may attract some to the cloisters, where they will scarcely read unmoved the most exquisite epitaph ever written of a young girl: "JANE LISTER: DEAR CHILD. DIED OCTOBER 7. 1688." Jack Broughton, too, "Prince of Prizefighters" in the 18th century, lies buried here; whose title as "Champion of England" the Dean of his period would not

permit to be graven on this incongruous sepulchre for a "bruiser's" bones; fearing perhaps the claim of the Dymoke family at any subsequent Coronation Service.

But by now the Abbey is too dark for the deciphering of inscriptions, while moralizing upon them shall find no favour with exigent vergers. And so the last visitor makes his tardy exit, leaving the great fane behind him, a vast and looming silhouette in the fading light; "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," as Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, one of its greatest Deans, has somewhere written of it, "a breakwater for the waves of human hearts and souls that beat unceasingly around its island shores."

SHEPHERD'S BUSH

THE ROGUES' MARCH

*Hark, hark, the Dogs do bark,
The Beggars are coming to Town!*

WITH the omission of the canine chorus, an absolute illustration of the words of the old song may be witnessed any morning in West London between eight and nine o'clock by those to whom contemporary "life and character" and the psychology of Londoners are of interest.

Through the outlets of that large and indefinite quarter known as Notting Dale or "North Kensington," there flows daily into Shepherd's Bush and Holland Park Avenue a stream of the street-characters of "London, W."; beggars of every sort and with all varieties of physical affliction, crossing-sweepers, hawkers, pavement-artists, cigarette-end collectors, and vendors of every description of kerb-stone commodity; all on their way to their accustomed "Pitches" in that area of London which is bounded on the east by Park Lane and on the west by Hammersmith.

Here are crossing-sweepers, male and female, with faces familiar to the nursemaids and children who daily cross the great arterial roads on either side into the Park and Kensington Gardens; "Screevers," whose masterpieces ("all my own work") adorn the South Kensington pavements; blind men, whose sticks tap their appeal daily near Harrods and in Kensington High Street; and pitifully-emaciated mothers, long known in the thoroughfares of Bayswater, carrying babies whose continued infancy is apparently unaffected by passage of the years.

Costers, too, rattle by with their laden barrows; no rogues these, but the aristocrats of the quarter;—did not the “Pearlie-King” for long reside in Notting Dale?

There, with her shawl and rusty bonnet en-haloed by gay-coloured bladders, goes one of the balloon-women who stand sentry outside the happy hunting-grounds of Peter Pan, and whose fate, when the wind takes charge of their stock and they refuse to release hold, has been so tragically told by Barrie.

Here are ample flower-dames, their heavy baskets replenished from Covent Garden still earlier in the morning and carried by sturdy athletes in caps and mufflers, several of whom still wear the khaki kit which became their accustomed livery during the halcyon days of War.

A typical group of corner-boys slouches by, paper-sellers, “fag-pickers” and what not, with the quick shuffling gait and the shifty all-seeing eye of the London street-rat. There, trundling in his little wooden “pram,” goes a jovial limbless Falstaff, whose “pitch” is in Brompton Road, and whose stock of boot-polish, laces, and matches is carried by his attendant, a very “Ancient Pistol,” in threadbare great-coat and wearing the Crimean Medal.

Ten o'clock or thereabouts will see each one at his receipt of custom and the commencement of that steady flow of coppers and small silver from a kindly public which constitutes the goodwill of his business.

Day by day throughout the year most of these gentleman (and lady) adventurers of the kerbstone ply their precarious trades in Western London.

But there is a craft whose followers appear among them in the winter only, and, when summer comes, reverse the practice of the swallows and melt away from beneath the waxing sunbeams for the five or six months of comparative warmth and light, until the shortening daylight of October once more reveals them at their posts of duty. What happens to crossing-sweepers in the summer?

Let an elder brother of the broom, a leading craftsman of the mystery, divulge its secret.

That hoary-headed practitioner of the puddles, an old acquaintance whom we have tracked from Shepherd's Bush to his accustomed pitch near Brompton Square, will enlighten us for a sixpence.

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"*Good-mornin'*, Sir! *You* don't forget old friends: fifteen year since I 'ad the honour of countin' you as one of my reg'lars. *Nice* weather! You'll pardon *me*, Sir: there I *don't* agree. Not for us pore sweepers! Wot's one man's meat's another man's pizon. Weather isn't what it was: no snow to speak of, and precious little rain! I dunno what's happened to things since the War—all upside-down like. New 'eavens an' new earths is all very well, but give me the old mud! In former years all of us used to take up our pitches

every autumn with a fair prospect of decent business and a good six-month of wet. But these 'ere 'alf-'earted winters is killin' our trade: no slush; no damp;—'opeless! And what with Borough Council sweepin'-machines an' tarred roadways everywhere—no wonder your rates go up and our profits go down! Talk about the Slough of Despond,—Ho yes! lots of Despond, but where's the bloomin' Slough? No one'll think of the poor old sweeper with the sun a-glarin' away and the crossings as dry as—er—a thirsty man's throat! 'ard times, 'ard times!—I thank you, Sir!"

And the old man, pouching our pence with a gloomy shake of his venerable but tousled head, continues his work of raising a slight dust on the immaculate surface of the crossing, which for the last fifteen years or so has been the scene of his hibernal operations from October—when the sweeping season begins and old hands vindicate again their vested interests in long-established "pitches" while newcomers peg-out unappropriated claims,—until June, when the whole crossing-sweeper tribe mysteriously vanishes.

Unaltered by the flight of time, with the same greasy cap and tattered overcoat, the same wrinkled grey face with its hoary stubble, the same quick tremble of cunning eyes, the same mute appeal of open-work footgear, he clutches his broom and, with a despairing energy, strokes with its futile bristles the unsympathetic asphalte.

In the bright sunlight and caressing breeze his

pinched cold look and shivering shuffle—as though to stamp a little warmth into his frozen feet—carry no conviction: men and women pass him with meaning cynical glances at the spotless roadway, or, sadder still, ignore him utterly.

Yet he is a survival of an ancient confraternity, established by custom in the life of London as firmly as are the beggars at the leathern-curtained doors of Spanish churches.

Cockneys of a reasonable middle-age can recall the figures of many past-masters of his craft; “Ramsammy,” the patriarchal Hindoo, who for so many winters in the past stood opposite “the Rag” in St. James’s Square, at the receipt of a lucrative custom among retired Indian officers; while on the opposite side of the Square sat—and still sits—the old lady with her perennial knitting and her company of cats; “Crimean Charley,” whose wooden leg and apocryphal medal-ribbons exacted their tribute of benevolence in Brook Street; “John Burns’ double,” too, at the crossing from Palace-gate to Kensington Gardens, will be remembered by generations of chubby Kensingtonians as pilot of their daily transmigration to the realms of Peter Pan.

Old women—for there is a sisterhood of sweepers as well as Brethren of the Broom—flourish chiefly in the City and West End, where patrons are mostly “business-gents” or clubmen; while old men are more numerous in Chelsea, Kensington, and Bayswater, where toll is extracted from ladies, children, and tender-hearted nursemaids.

Now let us make bold to ask the old rascal how and where he passes the off-season.

"I mostly goes to the sea," is his explanation; "there's always lots of pickin's at Margate and such-like places; and a bit of 'oppin' in Kent comes in 'andy in early autumn on the way back to London."

"And do you draw your old age pension?" is our final inquiry. His rheumy eyes twinkle.

"That's what I calls my *sinkin'* fund," he answers,—"*an' I ain't sunk yet!*"

.

The hour of return of these free-companions of the pavement varies according to their particular trades. The flower-sellers, who must be up betimes, are earliest back in Notting Dale, together with those who depend on a nursery *clientèle*. "Screevers" and blind men next, and then our old friend and his brother- and sister-sweepers; and last of all the street-rat, who pursues his picaresque calling as long as places of entertainment are open and opportunities exist of "scrouging a brown," until, dodging the too-inquisitive flash of the constable's lantern, he slinks into his den, a common lodging house, up some dark alley lost in the midnight mist.

PINK PINAFORES

A SOUR November day in Twynning Street, North Kensington.

Outside the Victoria and Albert public-house stands a tattered nondescript whose chest is decorated with two war medals and a cardboard placard announcing that he is an "Ex-Service man Marrid and with famly badly woondid," and whose drink-shot eyes are fast fixed on the swing-doors of the tavern, as he leans against a small hand-barrow on which a battered gramophone with a badly-dented horn grinds out a raucous ragtime inanity of the music-halls:

*M'dear ole home, way down in ole Virginny,
Dat's whar I played as a Pil piccaninny,
Dere's whar dey live, my Mummy an' my Dad,
I long to be back dere, an' it makes me sad!*

On the flagstones between the ex-warrior and the well-trodden threshold, two little girls, apparently of about ten years of age, are dancing madly to this wheezy cacophony. Both grimy and tousle-haired, the one dark, with a pale and precociously-intelligent face, the other fairer and with a broad rosy countenance grimy with London squalor, they turn and twist, their eyes sparkling, their thin lips parted in ecstatic smiles, their bodies bending responsive to the rasping lilt, their feet, in pathetically worn-out boots, tapping the pavement in time to the querulous mechanical rhythm!

Up and down, back and forth, hands on hips, tongues extruded in rapturous abandonment, they

hop and skip across the sidewalk ; their pink pinafores, indescribably grubby and obviously cut from the same piece of faded material, splashing the London grey with a touch of faint and incongruous colour.

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*M'dear old home, way down in ole Virginny,
Dat's whar I played as a vil piccaninny,*

babbles the gramophone in a hoarsely nasal falsetto.

The street is an interminable double row of sallow-complexioned brick-built houses, which shuffles its way north-westward in the inauspicious direction of Wormwood Scrubbs prison.

The verb " shuffled " is used advisedly, because it best describes the indeterminate meanderings of this squalid *cul-de-sac*, from the comparative respectability of its beginnings off the tram-choked thoroughfare of the Sibthorpe Road, along the seedy deterioration of its half-mile course of twists and turns and crossings, until it terminates with a sort of jerry-built dejection on the edge of some waste ground, across which looms the ominous sullen mass of the prison buildings.

It seems to have shambling along in a blowsy slipshod fashion, uncertain as to which direction it should take ; its indecisive halts marked at every crossing by a public-house or beershop, until at last it stops abruptly with a sort of guilty misgiving in sight of the gaol.

Its end is blocked by the decrepit skeleton of a vast hoarding, bespattered with mouldering

posters and riddled with yawning gaps, whence long ago the planking has been filched to fill the small cheerless cast-iron fire-places of the slovenly houses. Along its forbidding perspective slatternly matrons, with wispy hair perennially screwed-up in metal "curlers," seem to spend all day and half the night in whispering mouth-to-ear on dingy doorsteps, or in bawling blasphemies and highly-seasoned scandal across the roadway, on which a clutter of shrill-voiced children disport themselves amid the garbage.

.

Dere's whar dey live, my Mummy an' my Dad,

whines the gramophone with husky reiteration.

Over the doorway of Number 237, half-way down the street and midway between the Victoria and Albert and the Load of Hay, is nailed a notice-board, on which in tremulous and unpunctuated lettering the following legend is emblazoned—"ADOLFUS JEALES CHIMNYS SWEPT UNBAKABLE OVENS CURED"; and the uncleanly tenement whose threshold is thus embellished is the habitation of Mr. and Mrs. Jeales, their twin daughters (the two little dancers in pink), and half a dozen lodgers and sub-tenants who maintain a precarious existence on the first and second floors, while their landlord and his family occupy the ground-floor and basement.

Mr. Jeales is a chimney-sweep and "general odd-jobs man" whose work on weekdays begins

at 3 a.m. and ends about 3 p.m., when he retires, sooty and somnolent, to the only bed of which the establishment can boast ; whereon he snores undisturbed until awakened about 6 p.m. by the news-boy crying the " 7 o'clock *Star*." Mr. Jeales then essays a meretricious toilet and sallies forth to the Victoria and Albert, where he remains until, surly and incoherent, he is extruded from between its battered swing-doors at closing time.

Such is Mr. Jeales's habitual procedure upon weekdays. On Sundays, however, he stays in bed all day, absorbing current history—as described in the Divorce and Police Court reports and the racing and football news which fills the columns of his favourite *Reynolds's*—until the time arrives for his evening visit to the Load of Hay. For Mr. Jeales is open-minded on the subject of beer, and distributes his custom evenly between the two malodorous hostelries.

His marital and paternal duties sit lightly on Mr. Jeales : he seldom speaks to his wife, except to put up a full-flavoured but unavailing defence in the ceaseless wrangling-match which constitutes his married life ; " can't git a —— word in edge-wyse ! " he complains ; and he never addresses his children except with such occasional admonitions as " clear aht of it, —— yer ! " or " stop yer —— row ! "

" Dawriss " and Ann, our pink-pinafores dancers, regard with a sort of impartially malevolent neutrality this unending warfare between the authors of their unwelcomed existence. It means

but little difference to them whether victory smile on the brute force of the husband or on the shrill vituperation of the wife. If at all, their sympathies incline slightly, in loyalty to their sex, towards their mother's side; but filial affection is foreign to them, constantly reminded as they are that they are only "—— little nuisances," and that their presence at home is merely tolerated until they shall be old enough to earn their own keep and to contribute something to the support of their parents' declining years.

Meanwhile the "welfare-centre" and the school authorities look after their health, and the taxpayers provide for their education and for one good meal a day; the others mainly consisting of the remains of the fish and chips brought home in the evenings by Mrs. Jeales from the fried-fish shop round the corner, and the lower layers from the salmon-tins whose rare advent signalizes Mr. Jeales's infrequent triumphs over the street-bookmaker outside the Load of Hay.

As to Mrs. Jeales, no one has ever seen her at home without a small cloth "cricket-cap" pinned insecurely on to her straggly hair. She probably removes it at night and presumably resumes it again in the early morning. But such operations invariably take place in the dark, for most of her coppers find their way into the till of the Victoria and Albert or the coffers of some gaudy picture-palace in the Sibthorpe Road, rather than into the slot of the gas-meter.

Mrs. Jeales is always busy, always *en négligé*,

with permanently grubby apron and permanently rolled-up sleeves. She perpetually complains that she never has time to finish her "work," with which, in her own phrase, she never seems able to "ketch up." The completion of her household duties for ever eludes her, continually interrupted as these are by ceaseless colloquies, amicable and otherwise, with her friends and neighbours,—terms which, in her case, are by no means synonymous.

Mrs. Jeales's part in these delaying and breathless conversations invariably consists of a highly dramatic narration in vivid *oratio recta* of enigmatical duologues between herself and a mysterious "she," in which the latter shadowy female suffers discomfiture without exception. "So I sez to 'er, quite quiet-like, I sez, 'wot the 'ell's it got to do with you?' I sez. 'O,' she sez, 'for the matter o' that,' she sez, 'an' if that's the wye you tyke it, Mrs. Jeales,' she sez, 'it's *my* biz'ness an' not *yours*,' she sez,—like that. 'An' *that's* a lie!' I sez to 'er, I sez. 'But there,' I sez, '*I've* somethin' better ter do than ter stan' 'ere listenin' to a *woman* like *you*,' I sez,"—and so on, *da capo*.

Mrs. Jeales's thwarted devotion to her household duties leaves her but little leisure for attention to the niceties of Fashion. When she attends "the pictures" or a funeral,—her two favourite diversions,—she pins a bedraggled "picture-hat" on to her unkempt *coiffure* and slips over her "working"-dress an opulent-looking but, in

places, mangy fur-coat, made, apparently, by stripping from some uncatalogued specimen of the larger carnivora its pelt of apricot-coloured fur.

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Dat's whar I played as a l'il piccaninny,

gasps the gramophone with wheezy and appropriate insistence, and round and round whirl the two pink pinafores outside the unsavoury portal of the public-house.

"Dawriss" and Ann attend the Council school in the Colquhoun Road. They spend their days there and on the surface of the roadway in Twynning Street, and their nights on a flock mattress beneath the kitchen-table at Number 237.

"Dawriss," the elder by some fifteen minutes, is sharp, pretty, and precocious, and at ten years of age already excels in the art of protective "back-chat" which is the defensive armour of the London slum-child. Malnutrition, neglect, and the usual infantile disorders, seem to have had no other effect upon her than to have sharpened her shallow quick intelligence and to have kept her body thin and wiry. Her nose, however, is already developing a sneering tilt, and little snarling lines have already graven themselves at the wings of her nostrils; while her upper lip is beginning to curl discontentedly downwards so that you can almost hear the scurrile Cockney whine before she speaks. Her brilliant eyes already tend to narrow meanly at the corners, and seem to glint

with a contemptuous calculating gleam, suspicious, challenging. She has a shock of pretty dark brown hair in which she takes a pride, and her pale little face is intriguing and vivacious, though her cheeks too often betray an hereditary and therefore pardonable partiality for soot. She holds her own with her companions, and even with her elders, by her assertive independence and readiness of tongue; and the boys of Twynning Street have learnt to respect her stinging palm and still more stinging repartee. With her insatiable appetite for the intoxicating animation of the streets, she is essentially a London type; her individuality is redolent of the glamour of electric-lighted pavements, the noisy excitation of bedizened 'buses, the thrilling howl of newsboys.

Already a contest has arisen between "Dawriss" and her mother as to what vocation the girl shall follow when she has attained the leaving-age from school. Mrs. Jeales, with an eye to her share in larger profits, has already suggested "the drypery"; a proposal scornfully rejected by "Dawriss," who sees herself in some six years' time a haughty white-aproned "assistant" in a "kaffey," a cloud-cuckoo-land of frilly frocks and open-work silk stockings, wherein she shall disdainfully dispense, at her convenience, cocoa and buttered eggs to a worshipping crowd of fag-smoking adorers.

"None o' yer stuffy drypery-shops fer me!" she shrills, "with livin'-in, an' all, an' me fingers worked ter the bone ten hours a dye with sewin'!

I'm goin' where I can be a lydy after hours, I am! I want a job where there's fun ter be 'ad. Drypery! Slyvery, I calls it!" and she shifts the bull's-eye which is bulging her scornful cheek.

An intrinsic difference from her sister in type and character distinguishes Ann, who seems to throw back to some eternal housewifely original. Ann's face is broad and honest and utterly expressionless, with small dull eyes set wide over prominent cheek-bones. Her mouth is large and unsmiling, and her figure sturdy; her arms are muscular, with big and capable hands. Her expression is docile and unintelligent, and she has lank yellow hair, like a wig made by some inexpert *perruquier* for the head of an ancient Briton in some minor provincial pageant. Slow of speech and mind, Ann takes life pretty much as she finds it, and she bears with stolid unresentment the discipline of slaps which falls to her lot as junior member of the Jeales household. At school, in her painful pilgrimage through the standards, she can never compete with "Dawriss"; but she has many friends among the quieter children, and her chief interest seems to lie in the execution of much unauthorized and unacknowledged housework rather than in any striving towards success in the social life of the gutter-playground where her sister occupies a position of such prominence. Slow-moving, but with a tireless energy, she soars no higher than housework, which with her, however, is an absorbing passion. She will grow up into the sort of woman whose

prototype tidied his cave for some neolithic hunter, smoked his venison for some medieval franklin, or scoured the brass of one of Franz Hal's burghers. Love of "a house in order," of domestic routine-duties efficiently performed, is ingrained in her personality. Her like persists in every country and in every age: a type too fundamental to humanity ever to be vulgar,—the eternal peasant-woman, suggestive of the immemorial hearthside of the human family.

"Ann?" her mother has confided to a doorstep crony. "Ow, *she's* ony fit for service, *she* is! As I sez to 'er the other dye; 'me gurl,' I sez, 'as soon as ever I can git yer awye from school, inter service yer goes,' I sez. 'It's a general's plice fer *you*,' I sez. 'You can't 'elp being a fool,' I sez, 'but if yer let me dahn an' lose yer plice,' I sez, 'Gawd forgive yer, fer it's more than yer mother will!'"

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I long to be back dere, an' it makes me sad!

buzzes the gramophone with mechanical irony, as the two pink pinafores gambol and gyrate over the greasy flagstones.

Such is the environment in which their wearers are progressing into adolescence. Considering all things, they are comparatively happy; far happier, indeed, than most philanthropists would imagine possible. For the London Poor, especially in early youth, are true philosophers; and a little street-music, an occasional ray of sunshine, and, now and

again, a penn'orth of sticky sweets, will often drive from the doors of their memory such were-wolves as semi-starvation, cold, and cruel ill-usage. Their joys are simple, their sorrows accepted as the common lot, and for them, at any rate, life is seldom dull. Inured to squalor, they regard it from an angle inappreciable by tender-hearted observers bred in softer circumstances. Thousands of lads brought up in such surroundings were schooled in this way to laugh Hell to scorn in the trenches at Ypres, to play mouth-organs and joke about the stretcher-parties while the sky rained death on the filthy rat-infested dug-outs which at any moment might prove to be their tomb.

So "Dawriss" will soon be as happy in her tea-shop as she is at present, playing hopscotch or dancing on the pavement in Twyning Street. And Ann will find in service the congenial work which her instinct fits her to do well; and after a protracted courtship on the area-steps and a series of saturnine "walkings-out" (one evening a week and every other Sunday), will probably plight her troth to some steady and stolid young butcher-boy. For each of the girls has thus early nailed to her mast colours which epitomize a totally distinct ideal and outlook; and while "Dawriss" is ready to cross the bar of Youth and brave the wind and tides of circumstance in search of "a good time," the haven of Ann's questing is a good home.

Such memories of Twyning Street as they may

retain, though tinged with a few regrets, will not be altogether unhappy. For the Poor live mainly in the present, and waste as little time on retrospection as they do on forethought.

And Mr. and Mrs. Jeales? Well, they belong to a generation which has almost ceased to matter. For them are old-age pensions, the poor law, and the continued, if more carefully state-regulated, consolations of the pint-pot.

Meanwhile, the two pink-pinafores dancers sink, panting and happy, upon a neighbouring doorstep; while the ex-warrior, leaving his barrow and gramophone in their charge, sidles at last within the swing-doors of the public-house.

BELGRAVIA AND
MAYFAIR

THE PANTRY CLUB

LAST night I was made an honorary member of a club which proudly claims to be one of the most exclusive of its kind in the West End of London,—and certainly my signature now appears on the roll of its Associates beneath those of two Peers, an ex-Ambassador, and an Air Vice-Marshal!

But you will not find this fellowship listed in any directory or book of reference; its premises occupy no commanding position in Pall Mall or Piccadilly; it boasts no “colours,” nor does its title appear in the corner of any visiting-card,—indeed, its members’ acquaintance with such social passports is purely a professional one. But, tucked away in the very heart of Mayfair, between a ducal mansion and one of those narrow but expensive streets whose names still lend a *cachet* to even the commonest notepaper, there lies a little cobbled by-way, bordered by one or two garages that once were stables, a tiny general shop, and a pigmy public-house over whose inconspicuous threshold swings the sign of The Scarlet Soldier. And it is in the cosy snuggerly behind the bar of The Scarlet Soldier that, thrice weekly and on Sunday evenings except during the off season, the members of the Pantry Club foregather for convivial intercourse.

It was Prosser who acted as my introducer: Prosser, my paragon among mess-corporals during the last two years of Armageddon, with whom, having reverted to his pre-War calling of a butler, I had by chance renewed an undying friendship at a dinner-party on the previous evening. During

the meal our opportunities for conversation were naturally, or unnaturally, restricted; but when I left, a long and intimate "buck" with him upon the doorstep had elicited a cordial invitation to look him up the following night at the Pantry Club, of which interesting and honourable fraternity he promised to "make me free."

The little snuggerly at The Scarlet Soldier is hung from floor to ceiling with rows upon rows of "Spy's" cartoons of Victorian and Edwardian celebrities, punctuated by framed photos of past and present members of the club; and its open fire-place, disproportionately wide, gives it the air of a parlour in some wayside country inn. And here it was that I was introduced to a round dozen of portly and distinguished-looking individuals in dress-clothes, who might have been judges or admirals, or even, save for their collars and trousers, bishops,—but who, in fact, were butlers to a man.

Seated round a table beneath the open window they were eating and drinking with a decorous gravity, the earlier arrivals among them puffing cigars of a length and fragrance that would not have disgraced a Lonsdale or a Birkenhead. As I entered, all rose and bowed with punctilious courtesy; and, as I took my seat, Prosser informed me in a stage whisper that, by immemorial custom, each member was addressed while at the club by the name and title of his employer. And thus it was that I found myself flanked by two Dukes and discussing the test matches with a Viscount and a

Marquess, while a brace of hospitable Baronets plied me with devilled bones of superlative excellence and filled me a tankard of spiced ale whose equal I have only met at the High table in my College hall. Thereafter, with a formality comparable only to the most mystic Masonic ritual, I was inducted as an honorary Associate of the Society, which has, apparently, met in this little room for half a century, and whose full membership is strictly confined to butlers.

Not every butler, however, is eligible for election. Seven years in the same service, an unimpeachable record, and a situation in Belgravia or Mayfair, are essential qualifications for candidature; and election to the Pantry Club is regarded in buttlng circles with as much jealous awe as attaches in another sphere to selection for membership by the Committee of the Athenæum.

No member, remarked Prosser as he offered me a cigar, has ever been dismissed his job. "In fact, if I may say so, Sir," he added, with pardonable pride, "our members are looked upon as the cream of the profession."

But, I inquired, in view of the inverted social conditions now prevailing and of the dwindling number of those whose position will permit of their employing such admirable Crichtons as I saw around me, how can the club survive?

"Well, Sir," he answered, "judge for yourself. Here is our waiting-list."

And as I read a register of some forty names, "the cream of the profession" puffed their cigars

and chatted in discreet impressive tones; not, as the curious might expect, of the peccadilloes and scandals of high life above stairs, but of the world in general as it appears when surveyed from Olympian heights such as the snuggerly at *The Scarlet Soldier*.

It is true some stress was laid on the decadence of morals and manners in the exalted circles to which the members' duties called them; but mere tattle and gossip found no place in their conversation; and it was plain that my hosts quite seriously regarded themselves as the last champions of a social orthodoxy that is gravely menaced by modern vulgarity and indecorum.

And when, after the final toast of "Old England, old port, and old friends!" the Chairman left the chair, and I bade adieu to Prosser beneath a moon that made a silver and indigo mystery of the little Mayfair street, I confided to him my firm conviction that the Pantry Club constitutes an impregnable bastion of our social reputation, and that it is only by the precept and example of its butlers that Society will be saved from relapse into an ill-mannered and immoral chaos.

THE MAN WHO WINDS THE CLOCKS

I

FOR as long as anyone in the neighbourhood can remember he has lived in the queer little by-street behind the big West End square, at every mansion in which he is a weekly and privileged visitor; for he has wound the clocks in them all for over half a century. In some of the houses which have recently been reconstructed the clocks are now synchronized by electricity; but he has moved with the times and understands all about such new-fangled contraptions as wiring and batteries. "We're advancing quickly, Sir," he will explain to you, "but we haven't outgrown Time: clocks are still our rulers,—whether they're worked by wheels or wires,—and I'm a sort of Court-physician to them, if you take me, Sir." Rejecting holidays, always intent upon his business, he works for half a dozen well-known firms, and boasts, in addition, a small "repairing" connection of his own. A quaint little atom of a creature, his place—had he been a book—would have been among second-hand duodecimos in the sixpenny-box; and his grotesque little figure, clad, winter and summer alike, in a threadbare but substantial overcoat, is as accepted a feature of the Square as are the ancient iron extinguishers which flank the ducal portico on its north side or the old stone mounting-block which faces them from the kerb.

Houses are bought and sold, demolished and rebuilt, owners change and tenants come and go, but they all take over the little man as a kind of

fixture. No house in the Square has its secrets from him; and his quick bird-like eyes have glimpsed much goodness undiscovered by others, much badness unsuspected. And many are the mysteries unexplained of which the solutions lie hidden in his discreet and silvery head. And here are three extracts from his copious but unwritten memoirs which he related to me recently between his windings of my hall- and smoke-room clocks, and in which, for mere effectiveness of narrative, I have altered the first person to third, and substituted the "historic present" for his own past tenses.

II

"Who's there?" cries the Lady-of-the-house at Number 17,—such a pretty lady, too! (Indeed, as her elderly and doting husband often declares, the prettiest lady in London,—at any rate, until her two little daughters shall be old enough to dispute her claim in dutiful rivalry.) And, as a timid knock is repeated on the morning-room door, the Lady-of-the-house rises, quickly and with heightened colour, from the sofa where she has been sitting in very earnest conversation with an immaculate young gentleman, something in whose appearance proclaims him instantly a foreigner. "I beg pardon, Ma'am," says a softly sibilant voice from the half-opened door, the sort of voice that a nurse uses to a restless patient, "I've come to wind the clocks: I hope I don't disturb you?"

"Come in," says the Lady-of-the-house, steadying her voice while the young foreigner mutters a half-audible imprecation; "I—I'm glad you've come; the old clock's stopped. I miss its chimes so; I wish you'd see to it!"

"I will, Ma'am," replies the little man slowly, but with a keen glance at the lady and her companion. "I think I know what you feel," he continues, with the deferential licence almost of an old family retainer,—for he has known the Lady-of-the-house since she was born next door some five and twenty years ago. "You feel that you'd miss the old sounds. And so you would, Ma'am. The chimes of a clock that one's been accustomed to for years ring in one's head like memories, and remind one of home . . . and all it stands for."

And, with a tactful bow, the little man turns his back and begins to circle the minute-hand of the tall grandfather clock in the far corner. For fully ten minutes he manipulates its pendulum and plies his tiny oilcan and delicate tools with the long nervous fingers of skilful hands that are as well-kept and sensitive as a surgeon's; humming softly to himself the while, as though to drown in his ears all sound of the hurriedly-whispered conversation taking place behind him. And when at last the reawakened chimes ring out and his work is finished, he turns again, with almost stealthy deliberation, to make his exit.

But the young foreign gentleman is no longer there; and the Lady-of-the-house is sitting in

silence and alone, staring straight before her at the miniatures of her two little girls that hang on the opposite wall.

III

“Hullo, what ’ave *you* come for?” inquires the butler of the little man as they face each other across the threshold of Number 29; “your young man’s here already.” Now this is odd, for the little man works single-handed and employs no assistants. “I think,” he answers knowingly, with a bird-like cock of his head, “I think I’ll go in and see what he’s up to.” And he shambles past the butler and upstairs towards the drawing-room, where he knows that on the mantelpiece there is a small jewelled French clock which he has had the handling of for the last twenty years. He opens the door very quietly and finds a stranger just moving away from the fire-place: a young fellow in shabby clothes, but a fine soldierly-looking lad for all that, and obviously a gentleman, though he looks as if a good square meal would do him no harm. And as they stand there silently watching each other, the stranger’s eyes are wild with shame and terror and a mute appeal, and his face, as the little man described it afterwards, is “all speckly-white, like the dial of an old clock.” And all the time from the bag which the stranger clutches behind his back there comes a muffled ticking that the little man knows as well as his own heart-beats.

And then he speaks,—quite loud, for the butler may be outside as far as he can tell. “All right,

my boy," he says as he takes the bag from the stranger and extracts from it the jewelled clock, "I'll see to it, Harry,—you run home!"

And the stranger, hanging his head, goes out without a word; though, as the little man sees through the window, on reaching the street he looks back for a moment with a piteously grateful expression, and then, squaring his shoulders, marches away with his head well up as though he were back again on parade.

IV

No answer follows the little man's knock on the study door at Number 48. And so, after a second's hesitation, he enters, halting diffidently; and at once he catches sight of the familiar figure of his oldest and most distinguished customer. The old gentleman is sitting bent over his writing-table, doubtless absorbed in his interminable correspondence, his huddled silhouette clear-cut against the sunlit window. Admittedly the most wonderful man of his years in London, the mainspring of a dozen successful businesses, politician, sportsman, social celebrity, a Mæcenæ of all the Arts, this evergreen old gentleman had earned his peerage by a high repute in all these capacities throughout three reigns. As well-known in Bombay or Buenos Aires as in New York or Paris, in all of them he stood for British influence—financial, social, and political.

And now, in the middle of a summer morning

in the busiest month of the year, he sits here, strangely silent, in this quiet luxurious room where there is no sound but the faint song of birds in the Square garden, the distant drone of traffic, and the grave inexorable ticking of the clock which our friend has come to wind. The diffident cough with which the little man breaks the stillness rings loud and sudden as a cry in the night, but no answering movement comes from the mute figure at the writing-table; and, after a further pause, the little man moves nervously to where his customer sits, noting, as he advances, the head fallen forward upon one outstretched arm and the unfinished cigar lying cold upon the jade and silver ash-tray. And then, after a minute's closer scrutiny, the little man slowly bows his head and with a heavy sigh steps tip-toe to the window, and gently lowers the blind.

"Run down," he whispers to himself, "I always told him that one day he would. He's just run down,—and stopped."

And outside in the Square garden the thrushes' lilt seems softened to a threnody.

REGENT'S PARK
—AND BEYOND

THE PIPER OF PRIMROSE HILL

NORTHWARD of Regent's Park, the stiff and reputable terraces and roads, prim and old-fashioned in their immutable genteelness, present an abiding monument of the tastes and habits of the Victorian middle-class. The drear perspectives of semi-detached houses, all built of stolid brick and faced with tallowy stucco, are broken here and there by a larger villa "standing in its own grounds"; its windows prudish with lace curtains and venetian-blinds, and the path to its infestive threshold roofed by a hideous canopy of coloured-glass and metal.

The roads are very quiet near Primrose Hill: the growl of a balked modernity sounds distant and inappreciable: the million wheels of progress seem to have slackened here, and the sound of their grinding is low.

Indeed, the houses look as if they were still inhabited by survivals of the types Du Maurier drew in the *Punches* of forty years ago. Be-whiskered fathers, umbrella-ed and top-hatted; sweet placid-faced mothers in little bonnets and with hour-glass figures; and troops of tiny pig-tailed girls and Eton-jacketed small boys, nurtured on Sunday dinners of boiled beef with suet dumplings, followed by sago pudding and, perhaps, as a treat, a sip of Papa's "sound" claret (warmed in the dining-room fender). Then hey, for the "children's service" at the church in Albert Road, or an airing with Fräulein or Mademoiselle round the Inner Circle; while Mamma dips into *Lady Audley's Secret* in the drawing-room, and, in the

“study,” a slippered and smoking-capped Papa snoozes over the *Illustrated London News*.

Only the wireless aerials on the secretive roofs, and the occasional hoot of a passing motor, betray that the times have altered. And this effect of drab and *bourgeois* stagnation is heightened when the quiet spacious roads are shrouded by the deadening vapours of a foggy winter evening, rising like water-wraiths from the Regent's Canal and exhaled by the dead foliage and soggy turf of the ghostly park. Brooding and lachrymose, they enfold the district with a foggy mantle as though they wished to keep it inviolate in its Victorianism.

Through this smoke-tainted mist, which fills the throat and nose with acrid fumes, one almost expects to hear cab-whistles blown by phantom parlourmaids; to see the dim lamps of hansoms; and one listens instinctively for the collar-bells of spectral horses, tinkling in unison with their hoof-beats,—once the dearest and most characteristic of all our London sounds. The silhouettes of the stark trees, to which a few mouldering leaves still cling tenaciously, are smeared and blurred by the swirls of eddying fog; with here and there a clearer gap above, which makes the glimmer of some illuminated upper window appear to float in the air like a St. Elmo's light.

And when, on such an evening charged with mystery, and in a neighbourhood so permeated with suggestion of the past, the dank and dripping silence is suddenly dispelled by the clear shrill clamour of the Highland pipes, the dissonance of

this atavistic music with the booming dinner-gongs of Victorian villadom strikes on the ear with an incongruousness that stirs the imagination.

The sudden screaming of the strident notes, swelling and diminishing with the approach and recession of the hidden player, seems to rend the woolly fabric of the fog as a draper rips a sheet of calico. And, all at once, luminous shafts of light slit through the haze like the beams of a questing searchlight, as the curtains of nursery windows are pulled aside, and little faces, rosy with excitement, peer out into the gloom.

Along the footpaths a few sauntering couples pause in their saturnine "walking-out," and a belated errand-boy stands still, arrested by the strange fantastic sound and wondering, like Ferdinand in *The Tempest*, "where should this music be? i' th' air or th' earth?" While shawled and breathless housemaids,—for cooks and parlour-maids are now on duty,—scutter to quickly-opened back-doors to harken like flushed nymphs obedient to the lure of Pan. And even a looming oilskin-caped policeman halts and beats time with one ponderous foot to the strathspey's rhythm.

The Piper, dilated to towering and grotesque proportions by the fog, ruffles his twenty paces back and forth on the glistening roadway, illumined from time to time by the faint radiance of a street-lamp, round which the billows of vapour break like high-thrown spray round the impervious lantern of a lightship; his bag beneath his elbow, his cheeks ballooned, his head thrown

proudly back, his fingers fluttering over the vents in an itch of minstrelsy. Through the tingling density his serenade seems to scour the length of the street; creeping with the fog through doors and windows, leaping triumphantly over trees and walls and chimneys; while the unheeded moisture congeals on his coat and hair, and the ribands on drone and chanter droop dank in the windless gloom. His music is now muffled, now intensified, at the caprice of the fog-choked air; which seems to act alternately as mute and sounding-board.

The sombre nebulous curtains soften the outlines of the brick-built cubes and chimneys into a shadowy semblance of crags and close-set coppices, that seem to loom over sinister beetling cliffs; and the sound of the pipes fits in with this queer blotting-out by Nature of the unsightly products of human materialism. So that the Piper, if he thinks about it at all, need not feel out-of-place. For the shrill wailing of his nine notes is heard in the western Highlands, more often than not, in weather such as this; when stealthy clouds of mist, impelled by a slant of evening breeze, lower to the lochside, and, shrouding the glens, crawl down the dripping corries to the water's edge.

And so a whiff of misty mountain air breathes through the drones, releasing a wild spirit of the raw primeval past; challenging our artificial civilization and screaming defiance of its opaque ideals.

The blast of the chanter sings of an older, wilder life beyond the Highland line and seems to flourish a fiery cross in the tenebrous air: the bags throb and swell as though inflated by a ferment of elemental furies, while the music swerves from the wailing sob of a lament to the lilting laughter of a reel or the victorious battle-thunder of a pibroch; epitomizing all the old ineradicable passions of all the immemorial and persistent pipe-playing races,—Gaels, Arabs, Scythians, Ligurians. To sounds like these, and under similar cover of a fog-screen, the wild cateran-clansmen of the past used to sweep down in foray on the rich fat Lowlands: a nightmare of flashing targets and Lochaber axes, springing suddenly out of the murk, hacking, hewing, harrying; and then vanishing on noiseless brogue-shod feet as silently as they came, driving before them along imperceptible moorland tracks their sullen prisoners and *creaghs* of captured cattle.

And the Piper-magician who has conjured up these visions of far-off times,—a bloated, cynical-faced fellow, the cheap theatricality of whose shabby bonnet and threadbare kilt and plaid is mercifully tempered by the transfiguring fog,—handles his pipes indeed as though he loved them; with lips pressed as in a kiss to the mouthpiece-lip and the swelling bag hugged tight against his heart.

But his eyes are not rapt with the soul of his music, nor *fey* with the phantasms of long-dead romance. Instead, they range greedily from door

to window, marking the coppers that are thrown to him by servant-girls as scraps of meat are flung to a starving dog.

And the music dies away in a wistful diminuendo when he stoops at last to gather his paltry tribute; and then, like his freebooting forebears, he vanishes into the mist,—in the direction of Camden Town, where there are houses-of-call that know him well.

And over his arm the empty bag of the pipes sways gently to his walk, as though he were carrying off a sleeping child.

LONDON-LES-BAINS

AMONG the unexploited potentialities for "brightening" London none offers a wider or more entertaining field for speculation than that of its revival as a watering-place.

In view of the present distracted condition of the Continent, the discomforts of European travel, and the exorbitant prices which the apocryphal wealth of the English induces foreign hotel-keepers to charge them for the barest necessities, the restoration of London to its old pride of place among the fashionable Spas of Europe is worthy the attention of British medical consultants and the consideration of such enterprising capitalists as, say, Sir Basil Zaharoff. For within the last two centuries the mineral springs in and round London were noted for their marvellous healing properties, and our Cockney pump-rooms were among the accepted rendezvous of Fashionable Society. In 1706, for instance, the Spa at Hampstead boasted an ornate *Casino* or "assembly-rooms," complete with restaurants and gambling-rooms which stood among avenues shady, it is to be feared, in more senses than one! Hither, with Gay and Pope, came the fine ladies and gentlemen of St. James's to drink the healing waters; and Fanny Burney in *Evelina* gives a lively though later account of this metropolitan Monte Carlo. In one contemporary comedy My Lady remarks with a simper, "This Hampstead is a charming place to dance all night at the wells, to be treated at the 'raffling-shops,' and then to take a walk with a man of wit in Caen woods"; and My

Lord rejoins, with his naughty cynicism, "Truly, Madam; here we have City ladies that are overdressed and with no air, Court ladies that are all air and no dress, and milliners dancing minuets with their clothes hanging as loose about them as their reputations!"

Then there was St. Bride's Well, near the old prison of that name, where, just before George the Fourth was crowned, thousands of bottles were filled by "Mr. Walker, purveyor of mineral waters to the Coronation"; and St. Chad's Well in the Gray's Inn Road, where, in the mid-18th century, nine hundred persons drank the waters daily for dropsy and liver-complaints.

As late as 1826 the subscription for "the grounds and waters" at St. Chad's was one guinea a year, 4s. 6d. a month, or 6d. for a single visit; and that included the charge for a large tumbler of warm water daily from the spring. Spa Fields, near where Rosebery Avenue now stands, boasted a famous well whose waters were renowned for their efficacy in cases of nervous disorders; and yet more celebrated were the Bagnigge Wells close by, where, in 1760, two chalybeate springs were discovered in the garden of a house that once belonged to Nell Gwynn. A pump-room was then erected and grounds laid out which soon became a fashionable resort, where you could listen to music and sip a dish of chocolate or tea as well as your beaker of the salubrious water.

But the oldest of London's Spas was at Islington where one Sadler rediscovered, in 1684, the

old chalybeate spring that had formerly belonged to the Priory of St. John at Clerkenwell and, in medieval times, had been credited with miraculous healing properties. And at the period when "drinking the waters" first came into vogue hundreds of atrabilious hypochondriacs flocked hither to Sadler's fountain, which came to be known as "the new Tunbridge Wells." Here in an artificial dell of the spacious gardens, one could dance to the playing of dulcimers and pipes and tabors, the 17th-century analogue of a jazz-band; and there was also a "Musick-house," which ultimately developed into the famous theatre of Sadler's Wells, the days of whose decline were portrayed by Sir Arthur Pinero in his *Trelawny of the Wells*; though for a recondite reason he gives it the name of its rival Bagnigge. Throughout the 18th century, invalid Fashion, including the Princesses Caroline and Amelia, here took its daily draughts of nauseous fluid; and some grateful water-drinker inscribed on the walls of the pump-room his tribute of doggerel praise:

*For three whole years I traversed the globe,
Consulted whole tribes of the physical robe,
Drank the waters of Harrogate, Dulwich, and Bath,
But in Islington only I trod the true path.*

The spring at Dulwich here alluded to was a chalybeate fountain near the Common, where even in Thackeray's day there was an *Établissement-des-bains*, with pump-room, concert-hall, and gardens; and its waters, like those of its neighbour

at Beulah Spa, were sold in apothecaries' shops as a universal specific.

But during the long peace that followed Waterloo, English people acquired the habit of going abroad for their "cures," and the healing waters of London now waste their properties through percolation or down more modern conduits and sewers; though if these old springs could be traced and re-piped, and their beneficial streams rendered once more available, the boons of French *bains* and German *bads* could be brought to our very doors for the mere expenditure of a 'bus or taxi fare. And if the denizens of the dull neighbourhoods in which they may be found were transported to new "Chamberlain houses" in the healthier surroundings of some garden suburb, and the slums were all pulled down to make room for pump-rooms with spacious grounds, containing hard tennis-courts, cinema-theatres, opera and playhouses, and halls for concerts and "cabarets," then opulent Americans, Colonial magnates, and rich foreigners might mingle with health-seeking Londoners round the fountains of a Cockney Hygeia, and this business centre of the world, which is rapidly becoming also its greatest pleasure city, might blossom as well into its most favoured health resort. And think of the added revenue from entertainment-tax!

DINING OUT-OF-DOORS IN LONDON

DURING the last half-century or so London has lost the habit of dining out-of-doors, whether it be by reason of the vagaries of our modern weather or because all places suitable for its indulgence have long disappeared before the sordid encroachments of the builders. But many an opportunity for the revival of so pleasant and healthy a custom has been missed quite culpably : such as the institution of the open-air restaurant in Kensington Gardens, where it was fondly imagined that the enchantments of similar resorts in the Champs Élysées and the Bois de Boulogne might find a Cockney rival. Yet the glories of the "Welcome Club" at the White City and at the still earlier Exhibitions in Earl's Court and South Kensington—where our parents used to dine by the light of candles and a genteel Victorian moon to the strains of Dan Godfrey's band—are still within the memories of the middle-aged. What fun it must have been to hear the champagne corks popping in those fairy-lamp-lit gardens behind the Albert Hall!—in which, by the way, a rising young organist named Henry Wood used to give his recitals during the afternoons,—where smart moustachioed young officers, bronzed by a Soudan sun, would play host to their well-chaperoned lady-loves at little round tables under the rustling elm-trees, while G. A. Sala discussed Pinero's latest farce with a couple of fellow-journalists as he scanned the wine list a few yards away, and just behind them Randolph Churchill and his clever American wife entertained young

Mr. Balfour and, say, old Mr. Browning, with the assistance of their boy Winston, on mid-term leave from Harrow ! And further back still in its ever-glamorous past London was noted for its *al-fresco* eating-places. For from the 17th right down to the 19th century there flourished a succession of rendezvous for actual "diners-out"; such as Ranelagh, where in 1744 the entertainment evoked the eulogies of so great a *gourmet* as Horace Walpole, and where lovely Duchess Georgiana often dispensed her hospitality; and Vauxhall, which so hardened a *bon viveur* as Mr. Pepys found "most diverting," and where, after the bell had rung to herald the fireworks and to toll the knell of his hopes with Becky Sharp, Jos. Sedley drowned his sorrows in rack-punch; and, last of all, Cremorne, which survived until the 'eighties to furnish naughty "topical allusions" to Charles Wyndham in *Pink Dominoes*.

But, in addition to these better-known resorts, the taverns on the outskirts of the town were, during bygone summers, the meeting- and eating-places of patrons from every class of society, who repaired to them in the cool of the evening to feed and drink and talk beneath boughs on which blackbirds sang their vespers and roosted under a still smokeless sky. In Addison's day the gardens at the sign of The Gun (not, as one might suppose, a piece of ordnance, but a big tankard) were situated opposite to what is now Buckingham Palace; and in an umbrageous Pimlico stood The Monster, on the site of the monastery of whose

name its own is a corruption; each with a good store of food and liquor consumable underneath the trees. In more northern Pentonville was the White Conduit House, where the pastoral landscape of Hampstead and Highgate could be enjoyed by diners in the "gazebos" cut in its thick box-hedges. Hither came Cruickshank with his sketchbook in search of "character"; and Washington Irving tells how, on an occasion in its earlier history, Oliver Goldsmith once played the host here to three lady friends,—and couldn't pay his bill! To-day the junction of the Euston and Hampstead Roads scarcely suggests Arcadia; yet close by here, in the appropriate neighbourhood of what was later to be Eden Street, stood the Adam and Eve,—one of a score of like-named London hostelrys,—which was built on the site of Totten Hall in those Tottenham fields of which Gay wrote:—

*When the sweet-breathing Spring unfolds the buds
Love flies the dusty town for shady woods,
Then Tottenham fields with rosy beauty swarms . . .*

This place it was that in 1633 Ben Jonson took as setting for his *Tale of a Tub*, and that in 1750 Hogarth drew as the background of his fine plate "The March to Finchley." Charles Dickens, a name for ever inseparable from London topography, wrote in 1846 of "the little green bowers for eating and drinking, reading and smoking" which then dotted the tea-gardens at Chalk Farm, notorious in a less peaceful connection as a battle-

ground for "affairs of honour." ("Gentlemen! Gentlemen! this isn't Chalk Farm!" was the protest of Toole as "Mr. Spriggins" to the irate Major and his fire-eating French antagonist in *Ici on parle Français*.) And not very far off lay Hornsey Wood House gardens, now part of Finsbury Park, where one could sit in an arbour near an ornamental lake and dine off trout and syllabub; like Crabbe, who, after supping here one night off some such fare, and being too replete or weary to walk home, anticipated Jorrock and slept where he had dined, "lulled by the whispering leaves and the pipes of Pan." Perhaps in those "high and far-off times" the weather was less treacherous or Cockneys less conventional; but it is undeniable that from the Restoration down to Victorian days the practice of dining in the open air was prevalent among Londoners, whose modern representatives should therefore attend assiduously their parish churches to pray for the vouchsafing of an opportunity to revive this pleasing and salutary custom of their forebears.

BLOOMSBURY
AND SOHO

NUMBER So-and-so, Blank Square, Bloomsbury, is typical of the simple dignified architecture of what was once the stateliest domiciliary district in London, and, with its five symmetrical stories and its sublime front-door, still looks what it was two centuries ago, the town mansion of a gentleman of taste, position, and refinement.

You may notice, however, with regard to it three features which distinguish the house from its ninety-nine neighbours,—some of them also residences, but the rest private hotels and architects' or solicitors' offices. The first is that the curtains of its well-proportioned windows are changed with what would appear to be a capricious frequency; the second, that its front-door seldom displays the same antique brass knocker for many weeks together; and the third is that on the right-hand side of its wide-stepped threshold appears a porphyry plaque on which in shapely Roman capitals is carved the legend "A * * * *, ANTIQUES"; and this inscription furnishes the key of the two preceding riddles.

For Number So-and-so is at once the home and the business premises of A * * * *, an antique-dealer of international repute, who lives within with his wife and their little daughter; for whom, at her christening, her parents,—with prophetic appropriateness,—chose the name of Nell.

The house, in fact, is a curio-shop *de luxe*, wherein is exhibited, with an air of furnishing and not of mere display, a stock-in-trade of old furniture, pictures, prints, cutlery, silver, glass, china,

carpets, and hangings; of everything, in short, that the artistry and craftsmanship of former ages has bequeathed to modern connoisseurs of taste for household use and decoration. It is a development, on the lines of modern culture and luxury, of the old-time "junk-shop"; but without its dusty clutter of worm-riddled woodwork and tarnished brass, its squalid jumble of apocryphal "antiques."

A shy spare man, with the face and stature of a jockey and the eyes of an enthusiast, A * * * * has adopted in his dress and manner the subtlest suggestion of 1820 modishness. He is an expert born, not made. In infancy he probably insisted on the provision of a feeding-bottle of old Venetian glass; while his study at Winborough was hung with mellow old engravings of the school, spoils of a boyish zest for collecting which he refused to dissipate, as did others, on autographs or stamps; and the furnishing of his rooms in Trinity evidenced the maturing of an intuitive and impeccable taste for beautiful things, developed by quest as well as by bequest. An appetite such as this grows by what it feeds on; and to an amateur's itch of acquisition he soon added a professional acumen that has made him one of the most infallible, as well as the most prosperous, of living dealers. He serves an important *clientèle*, transatlantic as well as European; and his advertisements, modest replicas of the plaque by his front-door, appear only in the pages of three or four choice publications circulating among the *cognoscenti* of two continents.

His home at Number So-and-so is furnished in every detail with rare and exquisite articles, *every one of which is for sale*: from the before-mentioned knocker to the inlaid comfit-box on the tulip-wood table beside the spare-room bed; and he pays heavy super-tax on the profits derived from living in surroundings of habitual and elegant opulence such as the wealthiest of his customers may equal but cannot surpass.

When you dine with him at Number So-and-so you meet charming and distinguished company round a Sheraton table set with 18th-century silver and Lowestoft china, and presided over by Mrs. A * * * *, a queenly figure in soft-coloured tabinet and old paste jewellery, which gleams in the gentle radiance of Sheffield-plated candelabra and the rich glow of old San Domingo mahogany. If it take your fancy, and you can afford to do so, you may carry home with you in your taxi the Hepplewhite chair on which you sit, the Waterford decanter from which is poured your glass of '70 port, or the rat-tailed spoon with which you stir the coffee of your dreams in a tiny Sèvres cup. The Louis XIV *chaise-longue* on which you lounge as you admire the Cuyyps and Cotmans on the drawing-room walls, or listen to your hostess playing on a harpsicord that once thrilled to Scarlatti's touch; the old Murano goblet from which you quaff your parting "peg" in a smoke-room notable with Bartolozzis; all these and the glory of them shall be yours for the mere autographing of a harmless necessary cheque,

written quite comfortably on your host's Buhl *escritoire*.

Though proud of her husband's flourishing business, Mrs. A * * * * will confide to you that it involves occasional and disconcerting drawbacks. For, as she confesses, she has to live "in her boxes"; and not infrequently returns from an outing to find her wardrobe gone and her dressing-table already in the packers' hands. Indeed, her very bathroom,—so she asserts,—is not inviolable, for only the other morning her ablutions were interrupted by A * * * * 's frantic appeal (through the keyhole) to—"Hurry up, dear! Here's Mr. Van Greenback from Pittsburgh; he sails from Southampton this afternoon, and he's waiting to take away that panel of *azulejo* tiling behind the towel-rail!"

But little Nell, at any rate, never grumbles at the vicissitudes consequent on her father's system of business; for so many pretty playthings pass through her hands that she never has time to get tired of them; and any dismay that she may feel at the disappearance of a Chippendale birdcage or an old pair of brass-nosed bellows, is apt to be more than mitigated by the sudden arrival, say, of a Directoire musical-box or a 16th-century spinning-wheel.

Moreover, she is by now absorbing technical knowledge with her alphabet, and already nurses the ambition of succeeding her father in the business, and thus of becoming the foremost lady antique-dealer in all London town.

THROUGHOUT Christendom every city of repute contains a distinct and particular quarter where foreigners congregate in more or less exclusive colonies, and where, dwelling together with a protective instinct and for social convenience, compatriots form what almost seem detached and homogeneous fragments of their fatherland.

For the exiles within such colonies are never tourists,—mere transient birds of passage, roosting impermanently upon an unaccustomed branch,—but residents who for business purposes or from inexplicable choice make there a home from home.

And in most foreign cities it is the English whom Fate has planted there who are chiefly remarkable for this habit of voluntary segregation. In Paris, the European capital of the United States, there are streets within walking distance of the Arc de Triomphe where all the shops are English, selling English goods and exhibiting in their windows the latest results of the League football matches; while the *appartements* above them are occupied by scores of British families, whose bread-winners emerge of mornings equipped with umbrellas, handbags, and the *Daily Mail* (Paris edition), for all the world as though the Métro were the Tube. In the Eternal City, too, not half a mile from the round temple of the virgins in the Forum, there is a cluster of English flats and *pensions* populated, as it would seem, exclusively by English spinster-ladies,—latter-day Vestals whose appearance and conversation would be more congruous to Surbiton or Ealing.

And even in Oporto an English *enclave* is situated round the Factory Club, where, tell it not in Gath, the arbiters of vintages mix soda with their port; but whence a cricket team can take the field against the Eleven from any wandering cruiser of the Atlantic Fleet which, from the exigencies of the Service or from a devotion of her wardroom mess to "great and aged wine" as compelling as that of Dr. Middleton in *The Egoist*, may come to anchor off the Douro's mouth.

And thus it is in all important cities of the Western world; except in such cosmopolitan congeries as Buenos Aires or New York, which are too heterogeneous to be truly representative. For in the one no Middle-West farmer feels any more at home than does a Britisher, and to the other an *estanciero* is as extraneous as an Eskimo.

So London, reciprocally, offers more than one nesting-place to her outland birds; of whom the well-feathered commercial and professional element prefer, if Latins, the semi-detached respectability of Bayswater and Holland Park, and if Teutonic or mid-European, the *banlieues* of Brondesbury or Highgate; while Asiatics impart a *bouquet d'orient* to Wimbledon or perch within earshot of the Muezzin at Woking.

More interesting, however, are the less remote and compacter colonies of the smaller foreign fry. In Limehouse the Chinese quarter has attained even a literary notoriety, and in Holborn the Italian settlement on the *Monte Saffrone* has transplanted in London an eighth hill of Rome.

But only in Soho does one feel really "abroad." For it is here that a population composed of representatives of half the nations of Europe, and even some of South America, makes the labyrinth between Oxford Street and Leicester Square a quaint exotic oasis in the drab wilderness of London. In any café hereabouts you shall find a company as polychromatic and as polyglot as the League Council at Geneva; and, though less respectable, not half so dull. For here is the core of that bizarre community of waiters, musicians, cooks, *modistes*, and barbers, which ministers to the pleasures and luxuries of "brighter London," and whose unofficial life is a sealed book to most of those who come in contact with them during their hours of business.

Permeated with a continental atmosphere and spirit, these tortuous by-ways in which they live seem a *pastiche* of bits of Paris, Como, Naples, and Madrid, garish with splashes of un-Cockney colour, and, to the imaginative observer, at once effecting his magic transit *outré mer*.

For there is no debatable borderland to this cosmopolis. Straight out of a home-bred world of yellow fog and yelling newsboys with their "amazing revelations" and "three-thirty winners," you step into "abroad."

The moment you turn south from Oxford Street or north from Leicester Square you enter an area, pungent with foreign scents and vivid with tramontane colour, in which you realize at once that it is *you* who are the foreigner. What

would appear eccentric a hundred yards away becomes appropriate here; the commonplace in Coventry Street looks alien in Soho; and one would not be surprised to see the vans and motors scraping the kerbstones with their off-side wheels. Even the rare policeman looks out of place. He ought to be an *agent*, be-capped and *képi*-ed and wielding a futile bâton; or he should sport the plumed cocked-hat of the *carabinieri* or the green gloves and tricorné of the *guardias civiles*. No *terrasses*, it is true, encroach on the pavement outside the restaurants and cafés; but, as their proprietors will explain, our "sacred dog of a climate" alone is answerable for this omission. Within-doors the cafés are there, complete with little round tables, carafes of drinking-water, and well-thumbed copies of yesterday's *Petit Parisien* or of the *Corriere della sera* of the day before. At every turn an opportunity invites to eat exotically. If you would recall the memory of some half-forgotten *déjeuner* in Montmartre, the *Café-restaurant Bizon* solicits the occasion. Here *fondue de merlan Maréchal Foch* shall be served you by Pol, "the singing waiter" from Provence,—a fit descendant of troubadours, with teeth as white as his spotless apron and a thick mop of hair as black and shiny as his broadcloth jacket,—who trills in a soft joyous tenor as he trips nimbly round your table. Or, if your taste is less delicate but more truly Gallic, you may buy cooked horse-flesh at a shop near the Charing Cross Road with a gilded horse's head over its gaily-painted door-

way. Again, if, in a gastronomic sense, you would cross the Alps, you may sample *spezzato di Vitello* or *risotto* in a *ristorante* hard by the Palace Theatre that makes of all its neighbourhood a veritable "little Italy"; or, fifty yards further on, at the sign of the *Fuente Castellana*, you may eat *gazpacho* and *butifarras*. For the smells of all the Spains are concentrated in one little street just here, in which, moreover, there is a barber's shop where "Salvador,"—a Figaro indeed, with the blue jowl and impudent jollity of his great prototype,—will cut your hair or shave you, with the whole cast of *Le Nozze* standing round your chair; from Almaviva (an operator from the neighbouring cinema) and Susanna, who, deserting the counter at a tobacconist's in Greek Street, awaits her weekly "shingling," and the Contessa who, it is true, looks as though cash-books were more to her than *cavatinas*, down to Cherubino, a lyrical young retailer of olive-oil, who, from his appearance, might burst any moment into "*voi che sapete*." Some years ago, too, "Salvador" had an assistant who hailed from Paraguay, and who, so they said, could brew you a gourdful of *yerba maté*, which you might sit and suck there through a little tube as though you were waiting to be barbered in Asunción instead of in Soho. And, as one looks through the window, one may note among the passers-by all the undying types of the fantastic and picaresque tradition of the Latins. The rascal slaves of classical comedy rub shoulders here with Scaramouche and Scapin, and

swap cigarettes with Pulcinello and Pantaleone, or ogle brunettes whose lustrous eyes blaze in their sallow faces ; while witch-like grandmothers gabble with voluble matrons whose obesity offers no hindrance to their brisk activity. And in and out among them all, numberless urchins like grubby Murillo cherubs dance an unending tarantella with little ear-ringed girls in tartan frocks, or watch in awed and envious silence a candle-bearing procession of white-clad playmates bound for their first Communion.

Sixty odd years ago John Leech, sketch-book in hand, would walk these streets, gathering material for his immortal *Sketches of London Life and Character* ; while furtive Italians posed to him unconsciously as they whispered the watchwords of Mazzini and Cavour, or else tight-waisted, baggy-breeched Frenchmen who spouted Victor Hugo and spat defiance at "Napoleon the Little."

De Quincey, too, indulged his narcotic fancy in these narrow by-ways, and it was in Soho that Samuel Butler watched some ingenuous exile from the Mediterranean genuflecting before the show-case of a cheap dentist where he conceived true relics of the saints to be displayed. And that well-tailored, sly-faced alien puffing a big cigar might well be Casanova, back from the shades to revisit his old haunts. For once again Soho is turbid with the backwash of a great continental convulsion, though in its cafés Italian communists now execrate Mussolini instead of Bomba, and sulky Catalans curse Primo de Rivera as heartily as their

forebears lauded Prim; while Russian *émigrés* exchange sad memories of the Nevsky Prospekt, and even stray Macedonians may be found here, nursing their hate of Alexandroff's murderers.

At dusk, when the sunset softens the steel insensibility of London's atmosphere, and scarlet clouds lend a misty tenderness to the sky, the glamour of Soho becomes intensified. The lurid lamplight makes sinister mysteries of the shadows of narrow alleys, along which dark figures flit stealthily, like Venetian *bravi*, on what are probably errands of quite an unexciting usefulness; for with most of the denizens of the district the busiest period of the day is just beginning. But the effect is that of some sombre etching of Méryon's or some macabre wood-engraving of Doré's, as from the lighted cafés comes the stridulous hubbub of alien tongues, punctuated from some upper window by the disconsolate wailing of a child, or perhaps the nostalgic cadence of a song of the far distant South.

But round the corner again in Charing Cross Road or Oxford Street the spell is dissipated, the illusion vanishes. An instantaneous and abrupt transition restores one to the cosmos of the commonplace, a world of football finals and red "General" buses, of bobbed-haired typists and anæmic clerks, of Tube tickets for Tooting or Shepherd's Bush.

A POTHOUSE

SOMEWHERE in what has been termed "the raffish quarter" of the West End of London,—between Piccadilly Circus and, say, Shaftesbury Avenue,—stands a street of an almost sinister quietness, whose outwardly respectable houses yet wear a sly air of rakish knowingness, like that of a soberly-dressed solicitor's clerk who tilts his hat askew.

And half-way up it, on the westward side, is an inconspicuous doorway with a brass plate affixed beside it on the wall, displaying, in letters whose original blackness has been effaced by strenuous polishing, the name of THE STIRRUP CLUB.

This is an institution of the *genus* "Pot-house," and its character can be gauged from the fact that it is more usually referred to in sporting circles as "Plucking 'em Palace," "The Warnedorf Hotel," or "The Rogue's Canteen." For membership of the "Stirrup Club" is acknowledged on no self-respecting visiting-cards; nor does it boast a tent at Ascot or Goodwood, where, indeed, its members are usually to be found on the opposite side of the course. But it can claim, at any rate, that "Kelly" the "cocktail-king," who presides over an intricate regalia in its American bar, has invented an *apéritif* of a subtle perfection that is at once the envy and despair of his brother-monarchs.

The members who frequent the shabbily-decorated rooms of the club are mostly black sheep who have strayed thither from other more expensive and fastidious folds: and every day,

after their tardy breakfasts have been disposed of, they usually spend the later morning imprinting with the bottoms of their oft-filled tumblers fresh rings upon its mantelpieces and tables ; and they are wont to while away the long-drawn afternoon within the murky precincts of the card-room, or in vociferous inspection of the tape-machine in the smoke-and-whisky-scented hall,—which saves them the expense and trouble of actual attendance on the course. And, after the result of the last race of the day has been disgorged with a decisive click by the relentless apparatus, the premises are practically empty until about 11 p.m., when a flushed and keen-eyed crowd of devotees once more assembles in the card-room to woo capricious Fortune till the small hours.

The “Stirrup” is a proprietary club ; and the proprietor,—known to his friends and enemies as “the Flycatcher,”—is a tall and somewhat corpulent personage of uncertain racial origin and invariably dressed in the height of a rather florid fashion. No one knows how it comes about that he is able to occupy his proprietorial position ; or how it is that he manages to maintain his air of almost boisterous good-humour ; for it is a fact that he is an undischarged bankrupt, and it is rumoured, also, that he is still nominally the husband of an unreasonable wife somewhere in Golder’s Green, who refuses to divorce him, though he considerably affords her the most substantial grounds for doing so. Moreover, despite the watchfulness of Carey Street, the profits of

the undertaking, which so successfully elude the Official Receiver on their way to "the Flycatcher's" pockets, appear to ensure for him an ample supply of ready cash and the use of a two-seater car, of dubious ownership but undeniable luxury.

An ex-cavalryman acts as secretary; the cadet of an old Border family of which the very name conjures up lines in Aytoun's ballads with the rapturous rhythm of a horse's gallop. He owes his post solely to the good offices of "the Flycatcher," whom he met by chance a year ago in Bankruptcy Buildings, whither the devious paths of financial adventure had led them both. For "the Major," in the ingenuous impulsiveness of demobilization, had invested his small capital, and as much of his gratuity as had eluded the restaurant-keepers' hands, in the flotation of "The International Financial and Fiduciary Corporation, Ltd.," a fraudulent enterprise of which he had been induced to become a director by the seductive prose of a grandiloquent prospectus and the representations of a plausible stranger whom he had run across at Sandown. And the sequel is soon told; for a brief but hectic period of directorial activity was terminated by this gentleman's sudden disappearance with the negotiable contents of the office safe, leaving the Major's and the Company's affairs plunged in chaotic insolvency.

The head-waiter is quite the most popular character in the club: (excepting "Gobbo";—and mention of him will follow). An ex-N.C.O.,

his efficiency is unassailable—except by Bacchus—and he passes unsteadily from table to table in the huddled coffee-room tracing, on the cloth, with shaky but reminiscent forefinger, impromptu reconstructions of old battles with the Boche :—“ ‘The ’Uns ’ad a couple o’ pill-boxes commandin’ the village, as it might be near your brandy, Sir. ’Ere, where I puts the mustard-pot, was where the Noo Zealanders was ’eld-up by them garss-shells,’ ”—and so on. Of the members, the majority are hard-bitten racing-men who served in the War, though most of their careers have been less distinguished on the Turf than in the trenches, and there are a number of them whose proficiency at the card-table renders them envied and respected, if not exactly popular, in the club.

There are some, again,—and these look very young,—who are pursuing here, and in complementary places, their education as “men-about-town” on an exacting syllabus in the three R’s of neo-Georgian prodigality—Rolls-Royces, Restaurants, and Revue-girls; scattering coin like *confetti* for harpies to gather up; dissipating the best years of their lives in what appears from their faces to be a languid aimlessness, and heading for the devil with an air of bored good-breeding,—the sole visible result, to outward seeming, of six or eight years spent at a Public School and the University. Closely associated with these lads are a dozen impeccably-dressed enigmas, with faces like touched-up photos of popular actors, in which the sly greedy eyes are the only indication that their

owners possess any greater interest in life than is found in the smoking of countless cigarettes. It is certainly difficult to credit that the sole assets of most of these individuals are their wits, their winnings at cards, and a suit or two of clothes ; and that their expression of amiable *ennui* masks the acuteness of professional parasites who prey upon their fellow men and women for a living.

A score of well-known bookmakers, many of whom, from their dress and demeanour, might be churchwardens or small provincial solicitors, provide a solid and comparatively reputable element among the members : for they use the place as a sort of business exchange, and are generally to be found in " Kelly's " bar, deep in conversation with sundry trainers and horse-dealers who train a few " skins " for fixtures " over the sticks " or for the less important meetings on the flat.

The tale of *habitués* is completed by two or three elderly " bloods," survivals of a bygone London ; which in the days of their youth revolved for them and their generation round such almost legendary heroes as " Dicky the driver " and " Hughie Drummond," with " Jimmy's " as a background ; at a period when the current slang was the *argot* of course and stable and not yet that of garage and hangar, and when Nellie Farren and the judicially-unknown Connie Gilchrist were *houris* in a paradise of " Mashers."

The hall-porter and his assistant (commonly alluded to in the club as " Life and Letters ") carry on a flourishing little ready-money book-

making business in their pigeon-holed cupboard beside the front door, their takings from which are supplemented by lavish gratuities from the members;—for gamesters are proverbially prodigal. But it is to be doubted whether, proportionately speaking, their income from this source is larger than that of “Gobbo.” And no account of the Stirrup Club would be complete without a mention of “Gobbo,” the senior hall-boy. For he is the most sought-after person in the establishment; so much so that if he were to leave it I verily believe the club would dwindle to decay. And the reason of this is to be found in the innate superstition that is common to all gamblers, that vestige of a pagan propitiation of *Dea Fortuna* which impels race-goers on Newmarket Heath to raise their hats to “the Ditch” whenever they pass it. For “Gobbo,” poor lad, owes both his nickname and his store of ready cash to the fact that he is a hunchback. And there is never a member of the club who, when “Gobbo” hands him his coat and hat as he leaves to attend a race-meeting, or takes them from him on his arrival for an evening with the cards, would omit, with something of a furtive and almost reverential shyness, to hand him a shilling—*and touch the poor boy’s hump.*

KNIGHTSBRIDGE AND
KENSINGTON

ROTTEN ROW REVISITED

EVERY decade or so, by the inscrutable decree of some mysterious but omnipotent Authority, the hours and places for the attendance in Hyde Park of what reporters call "the World of Fashion" are altered and re-prescribed.

In mid-Victorian days it was "the thing" to ride in the Row in the afternoon, when ladies caracoled in veiled top-hats and floating habit-skirts, esquired by gentlemen elaborately frock-coated, with braided overalls upon their dapper legs and neat dress-spurs on the heels of their patent-leather Wellingtons: in much the same attire, in fact, as that worn by the great Duke himself as he rode daily from Apsley House down Constitution Hill to Whitehall.

As time went on the riding-hour was altered to allow for the carriage-parade in the afternoon,—the finest social spectacle to be seen in any capital in Europe, a glittering pomp before whose brilliancy the *promenade en voiture* of the Champs Élysées and the *trottata* of the Corso or the Pincio Gardens paled ineffectual fires. Thousands of the most perfectly appointed equipages, landaus, barouches, four-in-hands, mail-phaetons, and victorias, magnificently horsed, each with its rigid pair of cockaded flunkies and containing the best-dressed men and women in the world, passed and repassed in opulent pageantry.

Who among those of age to recollect it can ever forget the thrill they felt when the divergent streams of vehicles divided, and the hushed murmur of "the Queen!" checked the light

chatter of the modish crowd beneath the curtseying foliage of the trees, and stirred men to their feet to salute bareheaded the passing of a little old lady in a black bonnet and white shawl, the ribbons of John Brown's glengarry fluttering from above the dickey of her open landau?

But this Victorian grandeur vanished before the more easy-going laxity of Edwardian times, and with the advent of the automobile, the increasing vogue of games and the development of the country clubs at Hurlingham, Ranelagh, and Roehampton, the Park ceased to provide the only outdoor rendezvous for fashionable London.

Driving in Hyde Park *per se*, as the lawyers say, soon became obsolete, after having been one of the immutable conventions of the *beau monde* since before the Restoration, when even the Lord Protector had essayed (with but small success, as royalist chroniclers so gleefully recorded) the handling of a four-in-hand in "the ring." Though as a draught-animal in the Park the horse has disappeared, it fights hard to retain its place there for riding purposes, and Rotten Row remains the only road in London where motor vehicles are still forbidden; and to-day, for all and every morning until lunch-time, the Row is still thronged with riders: and on its north-east side between Apsley House and Albert Gate leisured and eminent individuals of both sexes still congregate to lounge away the forenoon in watching their more strenuous friends a-horse.

Gone, however, is the old punctilio of dress and

deportment, supplanted by a more comfortable *négligé* of country-clothes, of muslins and linens and Fair-Isle jumpers among the women, and an easier informality of tweeds among the men.

The shady strip of chair-banked gravel south of the Achilles statue is still the ganglion of the nerves of fashionable London, and shows at its best about Ascot time, when it burgeons with the bright frocks of country cousins and the brilliant uniforms of the foreign officers in London for the Horse Show, whose well-cut breeches and perfect riding-boots cannot be bettered by those of any horseman on the tan. And in this connection, it is noteworthy how boots and breeches invariably invest their wearers, however commonplace and otherwise unremarkable, with qualities of individuality and distinction. In ordinary kit most of the riders whom you may behold of mornings in Rotten Row move through the world with but mediocre distinction, and in "plus-fours" look a little self-conscious and even slightly grotesque. But when dressed for his morning ride, each man among them becomes somehow transfigured. His boots and breeches and a neat pair of short-necked hacking-spurs invest his nether limbs with a glamour that permeates upwards through his whole person. He almost swaggers; not so much with meretricious "side" as with a natural air of self-reliant and conscious efficiency, bred, one supposes, by his apparent domination over brute creation as represented by a job-master's hack. His hat takes on an almost breezy angle, and the

face beneath it assumes a look of decision and virility; and his right hand closes upon his riding-switch as though it were an unsheathed rapier. The feel of his boots and breeches and their symbolism inspire, in fact, that sort of self-confidence which, in the War, helped to transform your office-hand and indoor worker into a leader of men not unafraid to shoulder large responsibilities.

Even the sex of old described as "gentle" has found this out, and post-War Woman never looks more capable of asserting the final accomplishment of her long-sought freedom than when arrayed in boots and breeches; and in the Park or the hunting-field Diana thus attired proclaims unchallenged her equality with Man. Moreover, in neither sex is the effect entirely superficial. Great soldiers in the field take care always to wear these inspiring accessories of successful action; and admirals direct their squadrons in the nautical equivalents, sea-boots; while statesmen and judges prepare for their daily responsibilities by riding in the Park, their legs encased in these power-producing garments,—if boots may be so described. Ecclesiastics, even, whose ghostly counsel has raised them to eminence, reinforce the episcopal ring with the breeches and gaiters of spiritual authority,—for jack-boots smack overmuch of the temporalities. Flying-men bid for the sovereignty of the air in boots and breeches; and as for the Drama, your hero—whether on stage or film—never asserts his heroism more completely than

when booted and spurred : for spurs have ever been the symbols of chivalrous qualities since Arthur strapped them on the heels of his round-table knights at Camelot.

As to the horsemanship displayed in the Row the less that's said the better. Good hands and seats are few, and many riders seem as though they would rather be crouching over the handle-bars of a motor-cycle than mauling the mouth and bumping the sore back of a good horse.

But to return to the tree-shaded rows of chairs at Hyde Park Corner. Here it was that, in the 'eighties, "professional beauties" were mobbed by eager crowds standing round twenty deep upon their seats to glimpse the *belle tournure* of a Jersey Lily. Here also the "king of the sparrows," a living perch for his chirruping subjects, used to dispense his largesse of crumbs from a paper bag. Apart from the leaders of fashion, this part of the Park was at one time also remarkable for its lunatics. In the late 'seventies a formidable and stately but unkempt old gentleman, with long grey hair and beard, was a familiar figure here. He used to retain two chairs near the Achilles statue, where the newspaper kiosk now stands, one to sit on, and the other for his shabbily-picturesque sombrero. When asked for his pennies he would poise his cane, like a sceptre, upon his hip, and announce magnificently to the collector, "Sir, I am the Emperor of the Park." Another notorious eccentric of the Row was a man who many long years ago had had the mischance to lose his wife in the

crush near Stanhope Gate, and had never seen her since. For a long period subsequent to her loss the disconsolate husband hung about all day at the east end of the Row in search of his missing spouse; his chief delusion being that she could only recognize him by the trousers which he wore on the morning of his disappearance,—and which he continued to wear for purposes of identification long after they had ceased to be presentable.

But the Victorian lunatics are long since dead, and their post-War fellow-sufferers, if one believes one's eyes and ears, find more remunerative and congenial occupation in Art and letters and at Westminster; while in Hyde Park pauper and plutocrat still sit cheek by jowl in the quarter-mile stretch beneath the kindly trees, though the riders they look at compare unfavourably in dress and horsemanship with those of other days, and the smart carriages have been replaced by clattering taxicabs. But every type of the psychology of the Londoner, examples of every Cockney quality, may still be examined here by a discriminating observer; and the whole book of London life is still open near Rotten Row for those to read whose knowledge and love of human nature enable them to decipher its intricate characters and rightly to comprehend its never-changing story.

"TANGLETOES"

"STEP lively, you young divvles! D'ye see that rope's-end?"

If on your way, say, to Tattersall's, you hear something like this boomed in a voice like a fog-horn through the doorway of a little sweets-and-paper shop in Knightsbridge, and if at the same time you notice two newsboys, each with a sheaf of papers for delivery, hurtling therefrom like pellets from a peashooter, pause for a moment, I implore you, and turn aside. Tucked away in the narrow gap between a big hotel and a bigger "department-store" you will discover a pair of duodecimos among shops, which, turning inwards toward each other, form two sides of a tiny triangle based on the street frontage.

One slim plate-glass window is full of cigarettes and pipes and tobacco-tins, and bears upon it in brilliant *facia* lettering the well-known imprint of Messrs. Gaspon and Fagstein; while behind it sits an urbane and recklessly-tailored alien, who, as he puffs a 40 h.p. cigar, will sell you anything in the smoking line from a bundle of feathers to a box of *Emeticas exceptionales* at ninety shillings a hundred. But, repelling all such temptations, enter instead the humbler cubicle next door, where, among a litter of newspapers and magazines mixed up with jars and trays and boxes of cheap confectionery, you will find "Tangletoes," occupying with his vast bulk the whole of the narrow space behind the counter;—an Alp of a man, with a scrubby close-cropped summit and a broad strip of war medals along the escarpment of his upper

slopes. And the personality of "Tangletoes" is well worth a penn'orth of unwanted journalism or sweetstuff: for he is a seaman marooned, of choice, in London, and was at one time the heaviest petty officer in the British Navy, boasting, what he still claims to have been, "the biggest displacement in the 'ole bloomin' Fleet when the bathin'-bugle sounded." Looking rather like a battleship inadequately docked, he will make you wonder, as you observe him, how he manages in the mornings to insinuate his mountainous body behind the counter without wrecking the shop, and how at nights he extricates it when he leaves to waddle painfully home to what he calls his "bunk next the beershop off the Brompton Road."

For "Tangletoes," poor chap, is a cripple. The fall of his sixteen stone through the shell-riddled deck of a destroyer in the Heligoland Bight effected a permanent injury to his legs, which resulted in what he describes as a "squint in his walk," and thereby earned him his nickname and pensioned retirement from His Majesty's Service.

Unlike most sailors, "Tangletoes," when he had to leave it, quite resolutely turned his back upon blue water.

"I'd 'ad me fill o' the White Ens'n, Sir," he will confide to you; "man an' boy, I'd given it all I 'ad to give, an' I felt there was things ashore as I'd never properly 'ad time to lay me mind to. A P.O.'s job don't leave yer much leisure for readin' or pollyticks or studyin' 'uman natur'. But

now I'm a lame duck, I've give up tryin' to swim ; an' finds it pleasanter to sit quiet 'ere in London makin' up leeway in what I've missed of life ashore. In London I was born, an' to London I've come back again ; an' 'ere I stays till I gives the undertaker the 'eaviest job of 'is whole perfes-sional career ! Sittin' 'ere, I kin watch the world waggin' round me, so to speak, with the latest news of all creation tricklin' through me 'ands, free gratis an' for nothin' ; while the Adm'lty keeps me in food an' clothes an' lodgin', an' I make enough for etsetteras outer this 'ere little business. It's a queer new world to me, Sir, an' the men I meet in it gives me lots o' interestin' things to think about.

“That oily-'aired Levantine nex' door, f'r in-stance. We've parted brass-rags right enough, though 'e is a gravy-coloured Dago. Always pleasant an' affable to me, 'e is. Calls me 'Admiral,' mind yer, though I addresses 'im more often than not as 'Mosh.' Comes o' mornin's an' leaves again at night on a slap-up motor-cycle ; an' d'ye notice 'is dossy clothes an' di'mond ring ? If 'e can run to all that, wot's 'e doin' a-servin' in a little ole 'baccy-shop in Knightsbridge ? An' then, as a contrast, like, there's ole Lord Thred-bair round the corner in Trevington Square : dresses like a stoke-'old 'and a-coalin' ship, an' buys 'is penny paper every mornin' before boardin' 'is 'bus !

“An' the wimmin ? Ah, Sir, ' From Wimmin, Wine, an' Winners, good Lawd deliver us ! ' is *my*

addition to the Litany; an' I ought to know, for I've suffered from all three of 'em! I'm a bachelor, Sir, an' shall be, world without end, Amen. Not but what I didn't think o' matrimony once. There was a girl at Chatham, wot couldn't make up 'er mind between me an' the Ship's Corporal. An' when they give me this 'ere D.S.C., in the swank o' the moment, as it were, I asked 'er again,—an' she took me. But the Padre, 'e sez, 'This is a serious step you propose to take, me lad!' An' the Ship's Corporal, 'e sez, 'May you both be as 'appy as you *think* you'll be!' So I scratches me 'ead an' figgers the whole thing out quiet-like to meself. An' the day before the ceremony, I makes me number at 'er 'ome an' sez to 'er, 'Marriage is a whist-drive,' I sez, 'for you never know your partner's play before'and. Walkin'-out is all very well,—a matter of arms round waists an' a-lookin' up at the moon or down at yer boots, whichever you feels 'll 'elp you most. But after the weddin', I sez, 'one of us 'll want the winder shut, an' the other 'll want it open: one of us may like the tea well drawn, an' the other 'll like it fresh. I never was one to give in,' I sez, 'so I offers you this opportunity to jilt me honest an' take on the Ship's Corporal, wot's a lightweight, a cocoa-drinker, an' more accommodatin'.' Which she did at once, Sir,—me bein' their best man. No, Sir, I don't *maski* the females at all. Gold leaf an' painted upper-works is all that even the best of 'em thinks about; an' I looks on 'em as just part o' the whole bloomin' *burgoo*, so to speak. You've

gotter put up with 'em, like rates an' taxes an' foul weather. Don't let 'em infloence you, is all *I* sez. An' if Adam 'ad thought like me, we should all be in the Garden of Eden yet ! ”

And, heaving a sigh that threatens the stability of the little shop, “Tangletoes,” with one hairy tattooed paw, will weigh out “twopenn'orth of sticky ” for some youthful epicure of a customer, while with the other he takes your sixpence and hands you your copy of the morning paper.

THE PASSING OF THE BUTCHER-BOY

THIS morning, after breakfast, in the wide quiet thoroughfare before my windows, I counted a dozen butchers' motor-cycles. No one paid any particular attention to them, as their drivers clattered up and down the staircases in the adjacent flats, delivering meat to the dwellers in those palatial but unsightly tenements. But to me the sight was a portent, and in my ears their hoots and clatter sounded a threnody. To me, as to many another exiled Londoner who chances to return from time to time to his beloved city, many of the figures familiar to his former recollections of its streets are sadly to be missed. Gone are street-characters and once normal sights which, formerly seen so frequently as to have been almost disregarded, used to play their daily part in the pageant of London life away back in that remote and golden *ante-bellum* age when paper currency descended no lower than the elusive "fiver," and sovereign-cases still bulged the contours of comfortably-rounded waistcoats.

Of such, not one will be missed with more regret than that of the jaunty butcher's cart: a kind of meat safe on two rakish wheels, well-horsed with a fast-trotting cob in glittering harness,—your butcher ever had an eye for a good horse and a comely wench,—and driven furiously by a hatless red-cheeked youth precariously perched aloft on a high dickey, in trim blue smock and white-barred apron, a straw between his teeth, and his thick hair glossy from liberal application of a by-product of his trade.

The type has been immortalized by the pictorial chroniclers of London "life and character" from "Phiz" and Leech down to Raven Hill, Phil May, and Belcher.

How many Cockneys cherish among the dear memories of youth the brisk sound of the well-shod pony's trot, the quick pull-up, the bang of the cart-cupboard's door, and the cheery *jodel* of a dapper Orpheus as he descended,—bearing on his shoulder the wooden tray pronounced by archæologists to be of immemorial design,—to the hospitable Hades of the area, where a smiling Eurydice in cap and apron welcomed his coming with, figuratively, if not actually, open arms?

In those days your butcher-boy ruffled it with an air denied to mere greengrocers or vendors of fish. The larded symmetry of his locks showed a Byronic texture that never lacked response from cooks, however scornful, or in the print-covered hearts of more susceptible parlourmaids. His trim turn-out and the gallant rattle of his progress carried a vague suggestion of the glamour of the road and the wide sweep of country pasturage over which, in its brief lifetime, the raw material of his business wandered. The imagination of the Royal *gourmet* who once bestowed the accolade upon his Sunday joint must surely have been fired by its delivery at the hands of some such romantic messenger!

But this Cid of the sirloin is no more to be seen in our London squares: the high adventure of his morning visit has been replaced by the strident

arrival of a cycle, motor-driven or propelled by its rider, some pallid sloven redolent of oil, who sullenly extracts antipodean cutlets from the box—or even basket—in front of his machine, and with an air of resentful *ennui* delivers them to an uninterested “domestic helper.” The cold materialism of a progressive mechanical science has obliterated one more figure peculiar to London in its associations and suggestion of old customs.

The primordial partnership of man and horse at any rate stirred a fine spirit of poetry and romance, while the internal-combustion engine is but an uninspiring and prosaic colleague. For there is no mutual understanding or reciprocal influence between the mechanism and the mechanician: the latter appears merely to absorb from the former its passionless automatism,—its iron enters into his soul.

It is only in the air that Man seems likely to master his machine; and possibly when some future butcher-aviator shall deliver one’s mutton from a monoplane, it is he who may at last, perhaps, succeed in recapturing some of the breezy glamour of his prototype.

A PAWNBROKER’S shop-window.

How many pairs of anxious eyes have pretended to glance at the medley of unredeemed articles displayed behind its grimy panes, while, in fact, they were looking furtively up and down the street, longing for, yet fearful of betraying to others, the fateful interview with “Uncle”?

Of how many dramas—even melodramas—have its exhibits once been the pathetic “properties”? That dejected ormolu clock, for instance, with one hand missing; that shamefaced set of medals in their soiled plush case; that pearl engagement ring; that piteous wooden leg! Objects to inspire a de Maupassant or a Daudet, whose *Roi de la Gomme* might be imagined slinking in here to pawn his crown as guiltily as he crept into the *Mont de Piété* in the Marais, where Mr. E. V. Lucas, so he tells us somewhere, once tried to pledge his watch after closing time on a certain New Year’s Eve. Even quiet-voiced “Uncle” behind his counter could not disclose the plots of all these tragedies. Nor would he if he could; for the secrets whispered beneath the three golden balls of St. Nicholas, before which Florentine *Feditori* once bared their heads, are almost as inviolable as those of the confessional; (and only “Uncle” and Scotland Yard know what is to be known of any cases to which a criminal suspicion may attach.) And, indeed, there is about the place a penitential suggestion. Within is a discreet secrecy of little boxes where “Uncle’s” customers make confession to him of their hidden misery, brought here

for the absolution of "a little advance," with the scarce-heeded penance of a postponed redemption. In almost sacerdotal silence their sorry business is transacted here. For pawnbroking is the most reticent of all commercial mysteries, and no one wastes time in dilatory chat with "Uncle" as with the dentist or the greengrocer. The faltering pretext, the inarticulate entreaty for an additional half-crown, are all the talk he hears. Yet he is seldom stony-hearted, and often generous, as many of his nephews and nieces will acknowledge gratefully. In the poorer districts, however, it is only "Uncle's" occasional clients who require such secrecy. With his habitual weekly customers pawning is but an open and straightforward expedient for getting a week ahead of their income. Among folk who live from hand to mouth no sense of shame attaches to the habit, and every Monday morning they pledge their Sunday clothes to help pay the weekly rent; redeeming their finery each Saturday night when wages make this possible. In Shepherd's Bush or Bermondsey, close on a thousand pledges are accepted weekly by a single pawnbroker, of which nine hundred will be redeemed within seven days; and, at this rate, it is obvious that pawning soon rises from an episode to a prescription. And so "Uncle's" customers of this sort—mostly the wives of labouring men—foregather at the open counter with their bundles of pawnable articles, and gossip freely with each other, if not with "Uncle." But it is different in the big pawnbroking establishments in the

West-central districts. For here valuable jewellery and old silver plate are pledged by people who drive up in taxis or even in their own cars, which halt a few doors off before some bank or a luxurious shop, while a fashionably-dressed lady—pressed by the importunities of Dover Street or faced with “Queer Street” after some calamitous bridge party,—glides through the unobtrusive side-door with a jewel-case huddled beneath her furs: and not infrequently emerges having left both jewels and furs behind her. Or some no longer golden youth, dreading the advent of the blackest of Mondays or the outcome of some “little flutter in oil” that has failed to smooth his troubled financial waters, will slouch dejectedly beneath the discreet doorway, to horrify “Uncle” by the disparity between his needs and his securities. Around the British Museum the pawnshop windows are full of students’ books, whose former owners have found the ascent of the ladder of learning too “steep” financially; and near Drury Lane still stands the historic “Uncle’s” where a spendthrift actor is related to have pawned himself one afternoon, to be redeemed by his distracted manager only five minutes before the curtain rose on that same night’s performance; while hard by the Temple is another one, where a famous barrister of bygone years is said to have pawned his fees in a notorious *cause célèbre*.

But, take them “by and large,” as seamen say, our London “Uncles” are a responsible and

reputable class of public servants; true friends in need to many hapless folk in every section of Society, for whose benefit, on many an occasion memorable to their grateful clients, they have not proved unwilling to sacrifice their profit to their pity.

THE STRAND AND
CHARING CROSS

A DERELICT OF DRURY LANE

Get me a fellowship in a cry of Players, Sir !—HAMLET

I NOTICED him first in a bar off Drury Lane, and wondered whether I had ever seen him before in the flesh, or whether he was only a figure rendered familiar by the magic pencil of George Belcher.

A wizened, tall old man, with plentiful grey hair, surmounted by a high brown bowler hat of the kind affected by horsy undergraduates in the 'eighties, his drink-discoloured face was finely modelled and poised on a neck, scraggy and corded like a condor's, which rose from within a preposterous collar embellished with a made-up Ascot scarf whose symmetrical artificiality scorned all attempt at deception. A tight, full-skirted overcoat clothed his still shapely body, its close fit pitifully suggesting the absence of any other coat beneath. His legs were encased in worn-out trousers, rigidly creased, and on his feet he wore a pair of almost soleless fancy-topped patent-leather boots.

His story was told me second-hand by a mutual friend over a brace of cocktails, as we sat together at a small round-topped table.

His name was Maclehose, and he has been well known these last twenty years in the deep waters of the theatrical underworld, the flood of which ebbs and flows daily across Waterloo Bridge and over the more wholesome waters of the Thames, between the dramatic agents' quarter off the Strand and the apartments kept by slatternly "Ma's",—once visions of the stage door,—in the

salubrious neighbourhood of Brixton. Whisky, and still more whisky, had brought Maclehose down and drowned his promise, his ambitions, and his hopes, long years ago. Haggard and incorrigible, he had epitomized his destiny in a bar-side formula. "Here's luck, old man; I'm still here waiting for my cue! But I'm afraid that it'll come too late—and they'll ring down without me!"

Born and bred, as he would say, "In Thespian circles, Sir!" he had run through the whole gamut of "walking" and "general utility" parts until he rose to playing the lead in good provincial companies; and twenty-two years ago had married a pretty girl who played maid's parts in the repertory company with which he was then travelling.

A few brief months of happiness which soared superior to the trials and discomforts of a touring actor's life, and Maclehose became a widower.

Pneumonia, attacking a constitution strained by fatigue and overwork, carried off his young wife after a five days' agony.

Maclehose never recovered from the blow.

Alcohol, which he took at first to nerve him for his nightly duties on the stage, from being a tonic soon became a solace, and finally a master.

He lost engagements, and drifted slowly downwards, just like some withered leaf on a slow-moving, muddy stream, held up here and there by a friendly rock, but ever drifting onwards to the inevitable end.

When at his lowest, a relenting and capricious

Fate, to give him one more chance, led him across the path of Sara Lamb—"The Old Ewe-lamb," as she was irreverently termed by friend and foe alike—a great artist, who had made history for the British stage for half a century.

A consummate mistress of her craft, she had worked her way to the top of her profession ; playing heroines of every sort to the admiration of two generations of playgoers at home and in America, till Time had ripened her powers to an unheroic maturity. But, her youth past, she still remained one of the supreme exponents on our stage of the pathos and the strength of a woman's middle age.

She had known Maclehose in her early days ; for some time they had played in the same companies, and he had taught her gesture and had given her some lessons with the foils.

The warm-hearted impulsive fierceness of her habitual manner softened towards him when she perceived how evilly Time had dealt with the man ; and, appreciating at a look the major cause of his decline, she gave him an engagement to play minor parts in her own company, which she was just taking on a provincial tour.

But first she made him swear, by every god he knew, a solemn vow of abstinence for as long as he should serve with her.

For a time all went well, until that fatal night at Flaxborough : a city where her annual visit had become through many years almost a civic festival. On this occasion it was more than ever so, for it marked the fiftieth anniversary of her first appear-

ance on the stage—the jubilee of a player-Queen.

The company arrived upon a Sunday, and on the night of its arrival a banquet was given in Sara's honour at the principal hotel, at which were present her players and the chief civic and social dignitaries of the place.

Sara rose to the great occasion. She was sublime; her speech in response to the toast of her health—proposed by a local and recently-created member of the Upper House—was memorable for the perfection of its style, its dignity, and humour. She, and all of them, forgot poor Maclehose, who held himself absolved for that night of nights from his blue-ribbon vow.

He had known her “as a child, me lad!” Should it be said that he of all of them had failed to pour libations in her honour?

The champagne was exquisite, the old brandy superb. He waxed voluble, then incoherent, finally inaudible. Kind fellow-players carried him home and put him to bed.

The following night they were to open in “Sigismund,” that time-worn, fly-blown, tragedy of the Middle Ages, with Maclehose as the gaoler, in scalloped gabardine and liripipe.

The night after was to see the production of “The Secretary of State,” a modern comedy of manners, destined, if successful, to be put on afterwards in London for a run. Maclehose was cast for the part of a monumental butler, who

was to appear, like Nemesis, ushering in at intervals the chosen instruments of Fate.

But from that Sunday night the poor old man slept on.

Monday passed; he slept the clock round, and still did not awake. Some good-hearted friend in the company went on for him in "Sigismund" and did his tiny part.

From the small hours of Monday morning till Tuesday evening the poor wretch lay in a profound and temulent torpor.

When he awoke, he realized from the gathering darkness—for his watch had stopped—that it must be near time for the theatre.

Ill, and remorseful for his broken promise, he stumbled into his clothes and found his way somehow to his dressing-room, shunning his fellow-players in his shame.

No one heeded him; all were too busy and excited about the night's production.

There was just time to dress, and dress he did—but in the gaoler's garb he should have worn the previous night, with lantern, liripipe, and jangling keys!

Oblivious of the passing of two days, he thought that it was Monday night and "Sigismund" the play.

Hanging round the wings with fuddled brain and bitter thoughts, at last he heard a cue which he vaguely recollected as calling for his entrance.

With an effort he roused his faculties, and opened the door to pass on to the stage.

It was the situation in the second act of "The Secretary of State," when Sara, as the mother with a hidden past of which her son-in-law to be has just got wind, denies the guilt of her youth to save her daughter's happiness. Never had she been finer; the audience, enthralled, worked up, followed her burning words and gestures breathlessly.

The setting was sumptuous—the drawing-room of a mansion in Mayfair. Never had a first night appeared more full of promise!

Slowly the big centre door swung back, but, instead of the magnificent and consequential butler, there shambled on into the blinding light a figure, pitiful, grotesque, dilapidated, with straggling whitish hair; garbed—out-of-date by several centuries—in rusty gabardine, and dangling in a nerveless hand a lantern and a bunch of prison keys.

Sara stood speechless; her eyes ablaze with glittering fury. Maclehose blinked, gasped, and staggered to the door, the dazzling vision of lights and faces whirling before him like some vast phantasmagoria.

The sudden embarrassing silence seemed interminable. Then someone giggled.

The spell was broken; the scene ruined; the play's success imperilled. The tight-strung house gave a howl of laughter, and rocked, and rocked again. . . .

Somehow Maclehose managed to get back to his dressing-room. With numb fingers he resumed his own shabby attire, and sat, his head in his hands, in voiceless misery, anticipating ruin.

Presently came the well-known quick decisive footstep, and the door crashed open.

Sara stood there, her face bitter with passion, contorted with remorseless rage.

She pointed to the door with a gesture of magnificent ruthlessness, and, finding her words with an effort, spoke at last with a terrific quietness.

Only five words.

“Get back to your gutter!”

And Maclehose crept out.

The next day saw him back again in London.

Broken and inconsolable, he rejoined the host of the hopeless—the army of no occupation, stationed ingloriously at the bar-doors off the Strand and Drury Lane—where he still faces whatever future may be left for him down a diminishing perspective of “small whiskies—plain.”

AT A TERMINUS

ACHINGLY, stiffly, but eagerly and full of the thought of a prospective and joyous freedom in the open air, the little hibernating animals in early spring will crawl along the dark and devious tunnellings of their imprisoning burrows towards the luminous entrances beyond which lie their brief-lived happiness. Behind are the gloomy limits of their long imprisonment; before them is an arched and sunlit aperture, the gate of a glorious liberty of wide and wind-swept spaces.

Exactly so do the semicircular outward openings of the great London Termini appear to the Cockney holiday-makers who, from Easter to August, throng the crowded platforms in a good-humoured and glamorous excitement which disregards all external inconveniences.

For the curved extremity of the immense glass roof is the archway entrance to the Londoner's holiday land. At Charing Cross and at Victoria it opens southward; at Paddington to the west; and Marylebone, King's Cross, and Euston to the north.

But it is with the first two mentioned that the poorer Londoner is chiefly concerned; for, to his kind, the Southern Railway forms an enchanted carpet which will transport them with miraculous quickness to places of strange wonder and delight for varying periods—to many for only four-and-twenty hours,—where the breath of the sea is waiting to infuse a vital and refreshing essence into the dull monotony of their dreary lives. At Easter, at Whitsun, and in the first week of August

a large proportion of London's odd four million citizens will adventure through these magic archways upon the annual epic of their holiday : for it is in an epic spirit that these multitudes manage cheerfully to distil an elixir of happiness from the seething cauldron of crowded railway travel. They rightly regard discomfort as only one aspect of adventure, a trivial accompaniment to the joyful sense of enterprise that shatters the stagnant monotony of their existences.

The brigandage of the predatory taxi-men and porters who exact an outrageous toll from all holiday pilgrims is ungrudgingly condoned, and the raucous clamour of guards and newsboys rings with as much adventurous promise as the crew's chanties on a vessel outward bound ; and even the heads of riotous families (figure-heads, at best) smile, as, for the hundredth time since starting, baggage and offspring are counted by anxious wives and mothers. Herein it is noteworthy how a haze of anxiety is usually allowed to blur a woman's enjoyment of her holiday. For, though women have now confirmed their claim to a man-like hardihood and capability in adventure, a railway journey is still, to most of them, an occasion for anxious anticipation, agitated suspense, and ultimate exhaustion. Even your lady globe-trotter who has crossed Asiatic steppes or African deserts with equanimity will make more fuss in a train for Brighton than ever she did in a caravan on the golden road to Samarkand ! She will even lose her ticket in her distracted efforts to remember

whether before leaving home she told the parlour-maid to redirect her letters !

Once in the train, a post-War and almost socialistic sociability has modified the attitude of the normal Briton towards the amenities of railway travel. In a vanished pre-War generation the occupants of the four corner seats regarded the whole compartment as their private property, and scowled with sour moroseness at each fresh intruder. For a hundred miles they would travel in a resentful silence, ignoring their fellow-voyagers with a hostile and supercilious disdain. But a new epoch of class-unconsciousness has now arisen, born of an evenly-distributed economic pressure and the *camaraderie* of bad times, in which the superior first-class passenger has been well-nigh eliminated. All classes of Society are now "third-classes," and, in the train at least, *nous sommes du même chair*. At Charing Cross, crowds fill the platforms long before the train's arrival,—so much time do punctual people waste in their hurrying !—and multitudes pour into the just-emptied carriages, cheerfully grateful to find even standing-room in the corridors, where an ironic Fate inevitably decrees that the stoutest and most impassable passengers shall stand amid the bulkiest hand-luggage.

Once settled down in corridor or compartment, your traveller of both sexes proceeds at once to read and feed. The British holiday-maker, like the British playgoer, in order really to enjoy himself, must munch unceasingly. His progress is marked

by a *spoor* of paper bags and greasy sandwich-papers or sticky sweet-wrappings; and in the train, like a "hare" in a paper-chase, he scatters from the window a scrappy squalid trail which marks his passage through the trim decent orderliness of the Home Counties. His ruminant jaws keep time with the clanking wheels as, in their turn, these devour the glittering miles: and at his journey's end his travel-tiredness is but unavowed indigestion.

The resentful roar of disappointed stations and the rhythmic *coda ostinata* of the wheels mingle with the impatient wail of babies, the slamming of doors, and little happy bursts of casual laughter; while one or two of the lightest-hearted pilgrims beguile the tedium with the nasal bellowing of one of those mournful ditties which are the supreme expression of the British holiday-maker's ecstasy. And so the train speeds on through the sordid fringes of London and the placid quietude of the Kentish countryside, out to the wide horizons of holiday-land beyond: until, like a romantic mirage in the misty sky, there shines the distant shimmer of the sea. All eyes turn window-wards, papers are cast aside, even the busy jaws stop munching; and the "funny men" who have been exhibiting their actual lack of humour by deleting the "S" in the notices "To seat five" which are printed beneath the racks, and scribbling their names wherever possible upon the panelling, pocket their defacing instruments for further use on some future occasion and on some more valuable object.

(And, unfortunately, the fool who defaces railway-carriage walls is capable of worse; for he will carve his name and the date of his birthday on the Sarsens of Stonehenge and mutilate the pillars of Canterbury Cathedral. Wherein can lie the pleasure of such insensate savagery? That Tom was born on April the 1st, 1899, need not be registered on the walls of Walmer Castle; that Dick has survived unhappily since 1900 to record that date upon the castle-walls at Rochester is but a deplorable fact; and that Harry backed a horse for the 3.30 on Easter Monday, 1925, may interest the bookie who dealt with him, but is scarcely worthy of advertisement on the sacred stones of some historic abbey!)

And then comes the arrival, and the all-too-brief and halcyon holiday upon the beach; under the kindly sun which hangs in a wide immensity of brazen sky, to which small insubstantial clouds and children's kites like drifting jewels lend an ethereal tenderness; while a soft haze, impalpable as cosmic dust, hovers unmoved by the idle airs which waft a whispering of violins from the distant pier and fan the filmy plumes of steamer-smoke or the white sails of passing craft, which flit—frail as cut paper—along the broad blue riband of the sea, like butterflies that quest along some distant garden wall.

And then, on the return,—it is true that the wide mouth of the bricks-and-mortar monster gapes even wider to engulf its unwilling victims; but, as they reappear from the all-too-speedy trains

and fill again the platforms of the London terminus, they seem no longer tallow-faced clerks or pallid shop-assistants. These are young gods of the prime who come leaping landward from the sea; hale figures from some old Greek vase-painting; laughing, their hair all tumbled, the skin of their necks glowing with a browner tinge which bleaches their open and Byronic shirt-collars. Clear eyes glow in the girls' fresh suntanned faces, and even the older folk seem lightened from their London heaviness. Revived and heartened by the restorative Siloam of the sea, smiling and healthy, they troop down the platforms and out through the station-yard, and the environment of workaday routine closes around them for another twelvemonth.

A MARABOUT IN MAIDEN LANE

“PARDON, my Sir, but do you savvy please where these guys live?” This oddly-phrased request, no less than the curious guttural of the speaker’s utterance, caused me to stop and turn to him at the inquiry.

He was a lean and sinewy man, with lustrous eyes in an enigmatic and smallpox-pitted face; his Eastern origin apparent despite his shabby tweeds, Homburg hat, and patent-leather shoes. With an expression of compelling trustfulness he obtruded in his thin brown fingers a card bearing the name of a firm of theatrical agents.

We stood in Maiden Lane, with its stage doors leading to the mysterious *penetralia* of “behind”; around us a crowd of stage-carpenters, blistering the air with casual blasphemies, of chorus girls in worn-down high-heeled shoes, and of undistinguished actors whose resplendent waistcoats strove to belie the empty stomachs that they covered. I told him where to find the address, and asked him cautiously whence he came and what he was. He did not ask for money. “Me Moor—*Susi* man,” was his reply, “acrobat from Morocco.” For a second Maiden Lane seemed to vanish with all its squalors: I seemed to see sun-scorched Berber villages, to hear the harsh cry of a flight of cranes, and to smell the acrid scent of camels and of burning charcoal. I turned to my friend with a greeting that would be familiar to him: “*Es-salaam Aleikoum!*” (Peace be to you.) “*Wa Aleikoum es-Salaam!*” he answered, as we touched hands. He kissed his fingers, which had been

honoured by my contact, and with them lightly tapped his heart; making the courteous gestures which Moorish etiquette prescribes. Over a glass of ale in a neighbouring tavern he told me his story, in a quaint jargon of *petit nègre*, Magrebbin, French, and New York "bowery," and condescended to accept my sole remaining cigarette (though Sidna Mahommed forbade tobacco to all true Muslimin as "shameful"), lighting it with my only match.

By name Marzak-ibn-Melûdi, he was a Berber from the Sus country in Southern Morocco, born of a family of gymnasts, followers of Si Hamed U'Musa—patron saint of African acrobats, whose famous shrine is at Tasaralt in the Wad-Nun country. He had been early initiated into the acrobatic mysteries under the severe tutorship of the *Nakib* (Master) of the sect, and had soon become *Murâbat*, or one of the elect. Beginning in Algeria with a circus, he had come to Europe *via* Marseilles, and on to Russia. And for six or seven years he and five fellow-Susis had toured the world, seeing of it but little more than its railways and the music-halls and lodging-houses of great cities. The War found him in America, where he had continued his engagements till last year, when he crossed to England, and had just completed a lengthy tour under direction of the firm whose office he now sought.

He was the sole survivor of the troupe; two had died of phthisis and one of drink (may Allah pardon him!), and yet another had been drowned at sea. He told me of the mysteries of the con-

fraternity of Sidi-Hamed, and how the globe was scattered with his fellow-sectaries, earning their living by the acrobatic skill inherited by them and cultivated from infancy according to the precepts of their craft. Intensely nostalgic, they all, he said, eventually returned to the Sus—as he himself proposed to do, if Allah willed!—but many died from disease or the hazards of their calling: so that the villages of the Wad-Nun are full of simple Berbers in brown cloaks, relapsed into their old barbaric life, but who have travelled over half the world and know its capitals from Bagdad to Buenos Aires.

And thus we talked until I set him on his way. “So long, Monsieur!” he said. “May Allah be your guide!” and, vanishing, he left me to day-dreams of Barbary as I walked slowly eastward, listening in imagination to the quavering notes of the pipes of Berber shepherd-boys luring homeward their flocks at sunset beneath the whispering palms.

OXFORD STREET

THE BOOTLACE-MAN

A SHINING parallelogram lies spread, like the skylight-top of some cheerful subterranean hostelry, upon the pavement of Oxford Street, dispelling from the half-dozen yards or so of its area the streaming darkness of the winter night; and into its comforting radiance sidles the bootlace-man, approaching as near as he dare to the brightly lit threshold of the Tube station.

Diffidently he huddles among the little groups of business lads and shop-girls who make the place an evening rendezvous and wait, self-consciously impatient, for other unpunctual swains and damsels, *en route* for the "pictures" or the cheaper restaurants after their day's work is done, standing in the meantime cheek by jowl with individuals of both sexes furtively trysting on less innocent assignations.

Beneath the bootlace-man's battered hat is the face of a man in late middle-age: a face which, long ago, must have been sensitive and good-looking, and to which even now the emaciation of hunger lends a certain picturesque austerity. But suffering has slashed it with ineffaceable scars, obliterating all traces of self-respect and leaving upon it only the *stigmata* of irrevocable yesterdays, the wound-marks of a bitter struggle between the forces of circumstances and the force of Life.

Slow tears of rain drip from his sodden hat-brim, his clothes are soaking, and the water oozes from his worn-out boots. Only his tired eyes are dry, desiccated by the slow fires of frustrated hopes and the dumb discipline of poverty: and

they glint with an enigmatic light of mingled shame and craftiness, the grim counterfeit of what, with ghastly irony, almost seems a smile. His profession of a beggar, camouflaged beneath the shallow pretence of the moist bundles of boot-laces clutched in his numb right hand, debars the poor wretch from taking his stand within the vestibule of the Tube station; and so he halts under the glass canopy of its entrance, while iron doors clang-to behind him with a note of derisive prohibition and the sound of the sinking and ascendant lifts rings in his frozen ears like the keening of chorus-singers in some old Greek tragedy, who herald an imminent doom that they are powerless to avert.

The cheerful geniality of the forbidden interior, with its dado of bright-coloured posters and its gay perspective of electric lights glowing steadily in the dry clean air like a pendant line of stars, lulls for a moment, perhaps, the sharpness of his misery; and he ventures a grateful back towards the cordial radiance, as others, more comfortably circumstanced, may bask with lifted coat-tails before a cosy fire.

Down below on the quiet well-lit platforms, almost untenanted now until the after-theatre rush shall fill them for the last time to-day, the world must seem a cheery and comfortable place. And so he stands there as though his sodden soles could feel the solacing warmth rising from far beneath the refulgent flagstones.

A crooning murmur seems to reverberate up the

lift-shafts, a soothing echo from the white-tiled arching spaces underneath, hushing the ceaseless lamentation of the London rain and the sound of the tramp of tired crowds, callous to all misery save their own, as they trudge homeward from the labour to which they are lashed by an ever-ravenous necessity.

Like most of his kind, the bootlace-man has obviously seen better days. His hands and the vestiges of respectability in his threadbare clothing proclaim him a social derelict, worsted in the long fight with the invisible and relentless devil of despair.

There may be those who can endure unfaltering to fight the good fight and keep the faith. But he is not one of these. His character and history are but too plainly legible in his face and bearing. Whether his condition be the consequence of his own defects, of drink, depravity, or of blank ill-luck, he stands in the cruel white light—a broken man.

His hands are up: he has hauled down his flag, and sunk, a wreck, to the sheer depths of destitution.

A glance at him reveals the whole dark vista of his deterioration; his descent from addressing envelopes to delivering circulars, and from that again to selling laces at the kerb-side; his recession from Rowton House to the Embankment, and from the Embankment to the casual ward. He has regressed to a simple food-hunting atavism, and his vitiated faculties are solely directed to the

acquisition somehow of sufficient coppers to buy off starvation.

The sharp dry cough which wrings from time to time his emaciated body is evidence that the feeble painter which moors this hulk to life will soon be parted.

But such men as this no longer regard the grave with fear as something awful and incalculable. Without misgiving they have come to sense its promise of "forgetfulness of all past fevers." For the Almighty must be at all events too merciful to permit in the hereafter of bootlace-men as much of misery as they suffer on earth. To them Life is as the burden of the day : Death as the repose and restfulness of night.

And so, as though nothing now matters much to him, not even charity, the bootlace-man acknowledges our alms with a faint uninterpretable mutter and the merest movement of his half-bestial eyes. And, without turning his head, he seems by some sixth sense at once to have become aware of the rubber-soled advent into the lighted rectangle of a well-fed policeman, in an ample cape which glistens and steams like the "oilers" of some seaman who, relieved from watch on deck on a dirty night, climbs down the hatchway into the stuffy brightness of the fo'c'sle.

Then, as the dripping constable shakes the water from his helmet, the bootlace-man, with a hunch of his apprehensive shoulders, noiselessly shuffles out of the perilous glare into the reeking sanctuary of the night.

HE was a merry-looking rogue, in whose tired bloodshot eyes yet lingered a gleam of inextinguishable humour, that contrasted piteously with his worn trousers and shabby boots, and was oddly emphasized by the incongruous *tarboosh* upon his head and the strip of grubby Turkish towelling round his shoulders. Moreover, he was burdened with a metal yoke from which two boards hung down upon him fore and aft, while a third was reared above his head, blazoning with its fellows the attractions of a well-known Turkish-bath establishment.

"Yes, Guv'nor," he chuckled, "I swanks to my pals that I've got a job up in the West End,—but I don't tell 'em exac'ly what it is! Still, it keeps the wolf from the bloomin' door, as you might say, and finds me in somethin' to eat and a doss at night." His is a life apart, a solitary and contemplative existence, passed among heedless crowds and surrounded by mocking evidence of unrestricted luxury. So that he seemed to welcome the opportunity, afforded by my offer of a "fag" and the price of a pint, for a chat about the details of his profession: which he began by asserting that he had attained the apogee of a boardman's career, a "beat" in the West End; though the pittance he earns involves tramping the gutters all day in every kind of weather, fast bound in poster-boards and iron.

But, he lamented, the business is no longer what it was. Gone are the long strings of sandwichmen that used to line the streets between

Hammersmith and Ludgate Hill. The Dole, and more improved methods of publicity, are ruining "the boards," the use of which is now confined chiefly to the big theatrical and cinema advertising agencies and the proprietors of tea-shops and dancing-halls. (Though it is significant of the spirit of the age that more than one firm of publishers use sandwichmen to proclaim the merits of their literary wares, as though a work of fiction were a film, or a biography a brand of boot polish!) The competition, however, for even this kind of employment is still severe; for, though only the more respectable-looking among the army of applicants stands a chance of being engaged on a regular job, any of the usual agents in Blackfriars or Brewers' Lane could get you 500 to 1000 boardmen tomorrow should you require them. Hard as life is for them, the sandwichmen, as a rule, are seldom to be seen, as once they were, in tattered and filthy garments. Their clothing, it is true, has still the air of having been worn for a long time by someone else, but nowadays it is more often mercifully hidden beneath old uniforms or gaudy oriental robes; and in some cases these "supers" in the pantomime of London parade the streets in grotesque "big-heads" fashioned in *papier-mâché*.

"We mayn't look pretty," urged my friend, "but ours is at any rate an honest living; and in a way us chaps are doing a sort of public service." Nor, he protested, does one now so often meet "fallen stars" among them,—men who have descended to "the boards" from a much superior

rank of life : for most of his confrères, so he confided to me, are unemployables or out-of-work artisans. The broken gentlemen, according to him, all become taxi-drivers now. On the whole, my sandwichman appeared to be philosophically contented with his lot. For an eight-hour day he draws what is just a living wage for a single man who gets his food at coffee-stalls and sleeps at night in doss-houses and Salvation Army shelters. While on the march, he told me, due intervals are allowed the men for rest and refreshment in the side-streets ; and when their time is up, each man, with a punctuality astonishing in such a watchless crew, will doff his panoply, and, tucking it under his arm, hurry to the dépôt at a brisk walk in pointed contrast to the snail-like shuffle of his business paces. Despite its unhumanizing nature, its hardships, and the exposure it implies to the deadly damp of the streets, a man who has once fallen to board-carrying will often, so he said, continue for a long time in this cheerless calling ; resigned, apparently, to “ humping his slabs ” in peace along the gutter, while the current of London life roars unheeded and unheeding round him.

TUBULAR TRAVEL

THE air is full of Tubes! That looks like the *antithesis* of what I meant to say, but really it expresses it. For everyone just now is talking of junctions and extensions, of "straight-on" escalators, lifts, and subways, of tunnellings beneath the parks; and the profits of Tube companies are prophecies that earth-to-earth travel will soon supersede surface locomotion as the speediest and most popular method of traversing London.

But, though now for nigh on fifteen years we have been burrowing like rabbits, we have not yet really accommodated ourselves to the ways of the warren, and there are many things in and about the Tubes that still seem strange to us. The Grand Tour of Oxford Street Station, for instance, is still an adventure, and changing from one Tube to another still demands qualities of dash and enterprise; while not a few Tubists whose destination is "The Elephant" still find themselves, with ironic but bewildering appropriateness, at Regent's Park. Again, the childish antipathy entertained by engine-drivers to stopping at Down Street or Queen's Road still lacks an explanation: and how is it that the accord in arrival at the platform of both lift and train is still a rarity? Attuned though I have been for years to the vicissitudes of Tube travel, the day has still to come on which my lift shall actually *meet* a train. I once, however, knew a man who thought he was a *Train-decoy*. Directly he made his way from the lift to the platform a train would at once draw up, as though its arrival had been exactly timed to

synchronize with his. "The French," he would explain, "call Providence *Le Grand Capricieux*. To one it gives wealth, to another success in literature—or love; but on me it has chosen to bestow a gift that is unique. Unfortunate in most things, an orphan, a widower, a martyr to congenital hiccough, and bothered by business worries though I am, yet on my birthday some fairy godmother must have decreed that on my daily journeys by Tube from Ealing to the City—and return—my arrival on the platform from the lift shall instantly produce a train! In this respect only was I born with a silver tube in my mouth—to use the adage in an adapted, not a tracheotomic, sense. My boy, I am a favourite of Fortune!" Poor man! His faith proved fatal, and his epitaph should run:

*A Train-decoy lies Underground
Who tempted Fate too far,
And met his "Bakerloo" at last,
Though on the C.L.R.*

For he recently succumbed to a seizure, so I was told, at Holland Park, a station hitherto unvisited by him, where for the first, and last, time he encountered a *non-stop*. But, to return to our underground enigmas. On the Central London Railway the reason is still to seek why you may "exit" (should you desire to) by the entrance staircases on every day of the week except Tuesdays and Fridays, when uniformed officials are posted at them to prevent you. Moreover, why is it only on the Underground proper that the

medievalism of first-class carriages still survives? They usually contain but one old gentleman—probably a director—and perhaps an elderly lady; who, in this age of sex-equality, may be his co-director, but with whom the old curmudgeon is obviously not on speaking terms; while the odd nine hundred and ninety-eight other passengers of the thousand or so in the third-class carriages upon the train are carried past their destinations because they are too tightly packed in to alight.

Then there is the matter of etiquette. Why is it considered an act of old-world courtesy to give up your seat to a lady, but an unwarranted liberty to offer her your strap? And why, on some Tubes but not on others, is it bad form from the by-law point of view to stand on the outside platform of a car in preference to being squashed to death within? Then there is the quaint old custom of pretending to clip tickets. With a prodigality almost oriental, the “underground” companies spend several thousands a year on the pay and allowances of brass-hatted functionaries who stand at the platform gates equipped with unused punches. These men are seldom widely read, or they would have heard of Mark Twain and “Punch, brothers, punch, punch with care”; for, unless you stand still to insist on it, they will never really punch your ticket at all, and even if they do, you must yourself do the heavy work of inserting it between the punch’s jaws; though in some sudden spasm of zeal they will sometimes *try* to clip anything that you may hold out towards

them,—your thumb, say, or the edge of your folded evening paper. And, further, why are the conductors on the Central London all ex-sergeant-majors with jowls and medal-rows, and those on the District or Metropolitan irreverent youths who wave a green flag derisively if you venture to ask them a question, and invariably address you, if they do at all, as “Guv’nor”?

One day, I suppose, we shall find answers to all these conundra; and in another fifteen years or so, when the novelty of the thing has worn off and all of us at last are perfect rabbits, when newsboys’ voices shall proclaim 2.30 winners in a howling wilderness of empty streets, and our disheartened enemies shall have abandoned the idea of beginning the next war by bombing a capital whose citizens are passing-further-down-the-car-please in tubular security underground, our experience, I say, by that time may have led us to the solution of these deep-seated mysteries.

Meanwhile I shall stifle my curiosity, and, like a good coney, continue my grateful burrowing. And each year, when summer threatens, I shall retire, I think, to Brompton Road Station, where there are comfortable hotels which open into the Tube; or else to Goodge Street,—where, it is true, the *sirocco* is often tiresome,—and shall spend the dreary months from April to October in gazing at the sunny landscapes on the posters of Metroland; with perhaps an occasional jaunt *per* the Brompton and Piccadilly to the Criterion Theatre, where the playgoer may always rely on a genial underground

atmosphere. For when summer lays its damp and icy grip upon the land, only thus may you successfully defy its rigours, and, by going-to-ground in London, you may replace, with much comfort and more economy, a medi- by a sub-terranean climate.

“ROAD-TUNNELS, viaducts, commissions, alternative routes ! ” snorted Number 001—the policeman’s horse with whom, in an interval of traffic supervision by him and his master, I happened to be chatting at the opening of a by-street near Oxford Circus,—“ not worth a mouthful of chaff, the whole lot of ’em ! What’s wanted in the London streets to-day is a little *horse-sense* ! ”

“ Quite so,” I agreed, “ horse-sense ; and that’s why I want to pick *your* brains.” (How can you carry on a conversation with a horse ? Why, nothing’s easier ! Ask any cavalryman who’s lived with his mount for a month on active service, or any groom worthy of the name who’s served for a season in good hunting-stables. They’ll tell you how garrulous can be the steadiest old remount, and what a lot to say has the sixteen-hand wearer of a Sowter hunting-saddle.) “ All kinds of pretentious pundits,” I went on, “ have been airing their views upon this matter recently : but, so far, I’ve heard of no reference to the authorities who—er—carry the greatest weight, the most experienced of all practical road-experts, the mounted policemen’s horses. So I want to get an opinion on this perennial traffic question, straight, as it were, from the horse’s mouth.”

The old horse rattled his curb-chain with a gratified toss of his lean and well-shaped head. “ A-ha, my boy,” he neighed, “ and you couldn’t do better. *We* can tell you more in five minutes about the regulation of London traffic than a dozen self-opinionated theorists could in a couple

of hours!" And, as he scraped the asphalte with an impatient off-fore hoof, he continued earnestly, "The trouble lies not so much with the road-breaking gangs, or even with all these motor-vehicles themselves, as with the selfish and chuckle-headed humans who drive 'em. In the old days, you see, when we horses were in charge of most of the vehicles on the London streets, things went on much more smoothly. And why? Because we knew instinctively how best to cope with traffic difficulties. Your old 'bus-horse, for instance, or the smart pairs and singles that used to spank down Piccadilly, were up to every trick of street-craft. D'you think that the tactful give-and-take at 'bottle-necks,' the pulling-up sharp at blocks, the avoiding of accidents and collisions, the settings-down and the takings-up at the most convenient places, and the twisty work in getting past crawling vans, were all the unaided work of the poor old cabbies and coachmen? Not likely! It was the horses, I tell you, who took charge. The man was all right as long as he let his horses do the thinking for him. Yes, horses think all the time when they're in the shafts, just as they do when they're in the ranks or the gun-teams, or cutting out the work for the field on the Leicestershire pastures. Nervous? Well, who wouldn't be nervous at an awkward moment with a fat-headed human fumbling at the reins?

"You ask an old-time 'bus-driver—if you can find one: go through the alms-houses till you come across some poor old boy who once spent his days

under the driver's pink umbrella on a Baker Street 'Metropolitan,' or strapped on the box of a 'Road-car' or a 'Royal-blue,' with straw on the floor inside to keep the passengers' feet warm, and a knot of the Rothschild racing-colours on his whip in the autumn, when a brace of his Lordship's pheasants were waiting on the supper-table at home ! An old-timer like that will tell you that all *he* had to do was to keep his box-passengers amused with his back-chat, and to kick the brake when his horses told him to. And d'you remember how the conductor used to stamp on the step when a fare got in or out ? Well, the vibration used to run along the bottom of the 'bus and out to the pole between the horses ; it was a starting signal to *them*, and not to the driver perched up aloft on his box where he couldn't feel or hear it. The cab-horses, too, were as knowing as the old hairy-legs of the L.G.O.C. Why, I've been told of a hansom horse who made his way one afternoon from Liverpool Street, all through the crush at the Bank, and down to Westminster, with cabby drunk in the dickey behind him ; and never a word from a 'crusher' from start to finish !

"And, talking of drink, why are there all these cases now of chaps being run-in for 'being intoxicated when in charge of a motor-vehicle' ? Why,"—and he prefaced the explanation by a roguish whinny,—“it's because they've got no horse to look after 'em ! I learnt a lot that's been of use to me about those old times from an old fellow I met in the country some years ago, when

out for my six weeks' 'grass.' He'd been near-sider in a fire-engine pair long before I was foaled. Horse-sense: that's the real solution of all this traffic problem. Now I've learnt what 'savvy' and discipline mean in the Army. Yes, I was a troop-leader's charger under Allenby"—and the old horse proudly bent his muzzle towards the three medal ribands sewn upon his breast-strap,—“I took my discharge in 1919 and joined the Force at once; and my mate up topsides there was a corporal in the M.M.P. with Laurie. We've worked together for the last five years, and he and his pals of the Mounted branch have learnt a thing or two from their horses, I can tell you! In fact, and I'm not bragging, it's a question whether the streets would now be passable at all without the likes of us and our human partners: though whether we'll ever succeed in teaching anything to these selfish wheel-twisters, Heaven only knows! Lying down to their work, most of them seem to be; sucking a 'fag' and thinking to themselves, 'The road is *mine*, and every inch that's in it! Get out of *my* way!' Result,—congestion, curses, and collisions. It's *roadcraft* they want; and roadcraft is mostly Manners. But Manners went out when motoring came in! Well, so long! There's another tangle over by the obelisk there, and it's time for my mate and me to get a move on with it!” And, with a whisk of his long rat-tail, Number 001 was off across the street to restore a fluent order out of an apparently hopeless and blaspheming chaos.

THE TEMPLE AND
THE COURTS

THE Courts have just risen for the day.

Barristers, released after some five hours' work or waiting in the crowded and ill-ventilated halls of Justice, hasten, fatigued and sated with rhetoric and ratiocination, out of the robing-rooms into the reviving open air.

Equity men, who, like the forgotten "Christy Minstrels," never perform out of London,—where they spend a placid and passionless existence in Chancery Courts and chambers,—wend their familiar way northward to Lincoln's Inn; while the *condottieri* of the Common Law, whose life is one precarious bickering in sundry places—yesterday on Circuit, to-day in the High Court, to-morrow at Sessions or a County Court,—emerge adventurous, not knowing what challenge for the next day's combat lies waiting in their chambers.

Followed by their clerks, who bear like squires the bags of blue and red that hold their masters' panoply (wherein wig and law-book displace steel morion and broadsword), they pass through the roar and rattle of the Strand across to the tranquil precincts of the Temple.

To those who enter by the broad-flagged passage westward of Goldsmith's building, the swell of the organ in the Temple Church and the blended harmonies of the choir at weekday practice often appeal in invitation to step aside for a space out of a world of infinite bitter struggle into the calm sanctuary of its aisles, like so many harassed fugitives in former centuries.

Follow some such practitioner whom you may

see obeying the summons and entering through the Norman porch-way, for a brief interlude, a respite from anxieties, before his evening conferences in chambers or arduous preparation of to-morrow's cases.

Within the Church—once profaned by busy traders and their clients like its sacred prototype, that House of Prayer whence chaffering hucksters were once driven by The Master,—the choir is singing amidst the vacant pews.

In the dim ante-chapel of "The Round" sit some half-dozen men and women; silent, absorbed, listening to what perhaps may be the audible translation of their thoughts: grouped, with closed eyes and folded hands, around the tombs of departed brethren of the Temple chivalry whose effigies lie there in their harness as they lived, girt with their sheathed blades, mailed and spurred, their bucklers on their arms, their feet on the necks of their Paynim enemies. But their battle-cry of "*Bauseant!*" is for ever silenced: their black-and-white pied banner, charged with the same red cross that sanctified their surcoats, no longer drapes the walls.

In the imponderable shadow of the oaken door stands an official of the Church, gowned and authoritative, with an air of saturnine dignity that might have been borrowed from great Camden's statue in the triforium.

From the long nave beyond, the deep vibrations of the organ notes enhance with a harmonious reticence the resonant overtones of a baritone

voice, strong and full as the flood-tide surging past the terrace of the Temple gardens over there beyond the Hall; rich-toned as an Amati violin, a voice of gold.

Now triumphant as the exulting pæan of an Archangel, now terrible as the crash of breakers on an iron coast; tremendous as the thunder of the wrath of God, with whose name it makes the very fabric to reverberate from every niche and corner; now pitiful, faint and low as from an infinite distance, full of the agony of parting, the insatiable grief of homes left desolate, the sorrow of aspirations unattainable,—it dies away at last among the cold marble pillars into a mystery of silence sad as the twilight loneliness of a Gethsemane.

Then a boy's voice arises; eager, youthful, fresh as the miracle of Dawn; divinely ingenuous as the shy spring sunlight, which, smiling through the mist-veiled lancet windows, makes the very dust-motes dance in its glad radiance. Joyfully it soars, proclaiming in its purity and sweetness a message of eternal hope and promise; seeming to quiver and eddy amid the greyness of the shadows like incense floating upward to the Mercy-seat; and, when it ceases, leaving the very air vital and tremulous with its glory.

Outside, the lights begin to flicker in chamber-windows; the flagstones in the courts and the old timbered staircases clatter with busy footsteps, while in the gathering dusk, counsel and attorneys hurry to conferences and clerks deliver briefs.

The wheels of the great mechanism of the Law maintain their ceaseless revolution; and as the Temple clock strikes five, upon the panels in the cloisters a messenger pins up the cause-lists of to-morrow's sittings.

THE USHER

SILENCE! A voice peals through the echoing Court, dominant and penetrating as a bugle call, instantly checking the bustle of practitioners and the hollow laughter of distracted litigants: all present uncover and mutely rise in reverential salute as an austere, black-robed figure on the Bench holds back the curtain which veils from the vulgar gaze the *penetralia* of the Judge's corridor, disclosing with his relentless hand the advent of embodied Justice.

Such is the simple but impressive ritual with which commences the daily work in every Court of Law in London; a ritual depending largely for its due significance and the creation of a correct judicial atmosphere upon the dignity and right demeanour of its chief hierophant—the Usher.

Ushers, like poets and omelette-makers, are born, not made: their essential attributes are inherent; their faculties must be felt, not feigned.

The fate of aspirants to Usherdом who prove unsuitable is a mystery; they disappear unnoticed; while those who indubitably possess the requisite qualities, like old soldiers, never seem to die; or, at any rate, their personalities seem miraculously perpetuated in those of their successors.

The same endowment of dignified affability in Ushers, as in policemen, evokes the admiration of successive generations of foreign visitors.

Without his robes, the pleasant unaffected little man who trips into Court at 10.15 a.m., humming a lilt as he arranges the stationery in counsel's pews or on the Judge's table, and nodding genially

to acquaintances, seems but to be a simple, tax-paying human: and if the occupation of his earlier days or present unofficial hours suggests itself in the martial strut of the pensioned N.C.O., or in some mannerism vaguely recalling attentive ministrations at a City banquet, it is only further assurance of a common humanity.

But when, hastily donning his gown, he disappears through the Judge's door just before half-past ten, it is as though he underwent some mystic psychological transformation in the sanctuary beyond. For he emerges transfigured, looming of a larger stature, effulgent with a subtle *aura* of authority.

Without his heralding, of what effect would be the entrance of a tired-looking elderly gentleman in a bob-wig and sad-coloured gown?

It is the Usher's inimitable gesture, his clarion-toned assertion of the Rule of Reason and Order which strikes the keynote and proclaims the *motif* of the great daily symphony of the Law; exacting allegiance to the principles of Right and Morality without which the harmony of civilization would dissolve in a clash of jarring discords.

His office is no sinecure; the decorum of procedure is largely in his hands, and his every movement evinces an almost sacerdotal sense of this responsibility.

He motions witnesses to the box with a grave dignity that the Lord Chamberlain might envy. He handles volumes of Law reports (for he must be a librarian of knowledge and exactitude) with

the reverent familiarity of a Grand Mufti fingering a Koran. He receives in custody the fur-coat and "topper" of some opulent litigant before the associate's desk as might an Archpriest some costly offering before an altar. And he hands a glass of water to some hoarse K.C. with a courtesy in which condescension and solicitude are exquisitely blended.

Jurors are particularly his care. He hangs their hats and umbrellas upon the pegs like votive garments on a temple wall, and empanels their owners with the sombre gravity of a Familiar of the Holy Office; closing the jury-box doors with a solemn bang which is at once an admonition to impartiality and a consecration of their services.

During the long and often dreary speeches of counsel there is no call for his activities. He sits aloof, immobile; not dozing, but absorbed, like a disciple of Taoist philosophy dissolving his *ego* in the profound contemplation of eternal verities.

But he exhibits the supreme manifestation of his power when he has to check some unseemly tendency to laughter or vulgar interruption in the gallery or back benches.

"Silence!"—the one inspired dissyllable suffices for his every purpose. Passionate scorn and disgust ring in the vibrant and rebuking timbre of his voice; his whole soul seems filled with a sense of monstrous and intolerable affront. The cowering offenders shrink and shrivel before the lightning of his glance, the menacing thunder of his voice, as he hurls defiance at the powers of

disorder,—whom one almost expects to see precipitated from the gallery by his wrath, like Lucifer from heaven.

Finally, when the hour of 4 p.m. arrives on leaden foot, he once more pulls aside the curtain,—with the weary air of one who has for yet another day staved off encroaching chaos—and, as his Lordship's hand extinguishes the cold white light which illuminates the judgment-seat, he intones from the deepening shadows of the doorway his *Nunc dimittis*—"Silence!"

“**E**LIA,” child of the Temple, wrote with affection of the “cheerful, liberal look of it”; and truly of the Bar it may be said, that, despite its precariousness and disappointments, in no other profession have its practitioners a more agreeable quarter of the town in which to ply their trade.

Gratefully indeed may learned counsel sing *Lætus sorte mea*; for fair is their lot and goodly is their heritage, as regards the environment of their daily labours, compared with that of men in other callings. Consider, for instance, the doctors, in the antiseptic but sombre atmosphere of Harley Street; where every passer-by seems to be carrying his death-warrant in his pocket, and even the postman’s knock sounds like the relentless tap of an undertaker’s hammer. Or take your City men in offices; uneasy rooms equipped with all the soulless apparatus of business, patent files, card-index cabinets, and the like; and with the very daylight borrowed from reflectors.

Granted that solicitors enjoy a certain serenity in such localities as Ely Place and Bedford Row, in offices pervaded by enigmatical managing clerks who glide about with cold mysterious faces, like familiars of some unholy Inquisition; that artists in chilly Chelsea studios contrive a certain glamour of their own; and that musicians—but musicians have no quarter: they are nomadic—the Arabs of the Arts.

But what in all these will bear comparison with the Chambers of any “Utter Barrister” in the Temple? The quiet airy room, its ancient panel-

ling hung with old prints of great Justiciars and legal caricatures from "Spy's" good-natured pencil; decorated with its dignified platoons of calf-bound books, rank upon rank; and with, perhaps, a scroll of Grinling Gibbons carving beneath the well-proportioned windows which admit the cheerful sunlight, and—if in Essex or New Courts—through which one hears the "low song" of the fountain, sacred to Ruth Pinch, close to the Middle Temple Hall, where Benchers quaffed great bowls of hippocras in Shakespeare's time; or—if in King's Bench Walk—through which, like Lamb, one watches sails glide by upon the river, or clients glide in through one of Wren's matchless doorways. How different, too, from the bob-haired "office girl" is the urbane barrister's clerk; discreet, and with his air of well-merited responsibility, befitting one who holds within his hands the professional destinies of his employers.

The R.A.'s model in *Punch* complained of the inequalities of public appreciation. "Yes, Sir," said he, "I'm Mr. Dauber's model: but that's not all. I arrange his sittings, stretch his canvases, clean his palette and brushes, and mix his colours. *All he has to do is just to shove them on!*"

So, but more truthfully, is it with the barrister's clerk. For his master's practice—conducted on a sort of profit-sharing basis—largely depends on his unflagging zeal, unfailing memory, and ever-ready tact. He must be wise, astute, well-mannered, and well-dressed. (Were not Mr.

Mallard's elaborate waistcoat and gold watch-chain "the outward indication of the lucrative and extensive practice of Mr. Serjeant Snubbin"?) It is for him to attract new clients and to retain old ones, to supervise the finances of the fee-book, to arrange the work in Chambers, and, half task-master, half henchman, to map out in detail each day of his employer's professional existence.

How many barristers, too, date their success from the time when they took over from some brother advocate, retired, promoted, or deceased, a well-known clerk, with all the connection his efficiency implied?

The services of such a clerical Crichton are usually shared by two or three counsel in the same Chambers, within the smallest and most cupboard-like room of which he sits, a sort of forensic staff officer, shaping the strategy and tactics of their practices; his sole assistant, some inky-fingered youth with flattened hair and a demeanour of mingled innocence and worldly wisdom, whom he alludes to as "the junior." It is as "junior" that a barrister's clerk most often begins his career, throughout which his great ambition is for his master's elevation to the Bench; whereat, as a Judge's clerk, he will sit in Court near by his Lordship, facing a deferential public from an assured position on the very rim, so to speak, of the Fountain of Justice; and with the expression of one who, conscious of deserved success, says with a generous gesture, "I and he pulled this thing off together: we have done well." Served

with such faithful discretion amid surroundings such as these, no wonder barristers lay claim to a detached professional intellectuality foreign to other callings. The *manes* of Goldsmith, Thackeray, and Dickens, and, above all, of "Elia" with his gentle stutter, must needs impart a touch of literary elegance even to a "defence and counter-claim" or an "advice on evidence"; and how a man, writing in Chambers of which the very name perpetuates "the sonorous memory of Johnson," can fill an "opinion" with split infinitives, passes one's comprehension!

Romance and history, too, pursue the barrister even across the Strand to the very Courts themselves; for was not the ground on which Street's building stands once the "lists" of tilting Templars, "poor soldiers of Christ" clad in chain-armour and white cloaks, like the sheikhs of their Saracen enemies?

Woman has now made good her claim to share with man the honours of the Bar, and, if Portia does not disdain to follow the prevailing *mode*, the grey old Courts and Chambers of the Temple may burgeon before long with such a brilliance of colour as has not been seen since Serjeants in their gowns of murrey, black, and scarlet passed through its gardens to their Inn beyond.

AT THE SIGN OF THE FOUL ANCHOR

“FIVE steps and overboard.” Back and forth along a corridor in the Law Courts they pace in a rhythmic tramp through the buzzing crowd of barristers in wig and gown, solicitors’ clerks, and the squalid medley of litigants in cases to be heard by the Divorce Court next door, gazing at but beyond it all as though out to the healthy and salt horizons of their accustomed element.

What are they doing in this incongruous galley?

Two seafaring men : fo’c’sle-hands, sturdy and broad of beam, square-rigged in pilot-jackets and wide trousers ; with little gold rings in their ears, and blue peaked caps too small for their close-cropped bullet-heads.

From faces coloured like East India teak look out the clear, inscrutable eyes of men who have followed the sea from youth, puckered round with a network of wrinkled ridges graven by constant peering ahead through the glare of the tropics or through the haze and wrack of more northerly seas.

Back and forth before the doors of the Court they pass, in an unhurried rolling walk, so many steps each way, as though keeping a watch on the bridge ; with a tilt of the head at the turn, as it were for a momentary glance overside and perhaps a reflective expectoration.

They are, in fact, but a couple of witnesses waiting to give their evidence in the Court of Admiralty—“ the Sign of the Foul Anchor ” : so called in fo’c’sles throughout the Seven Seas from the official emblem of the brass anchor with its

length of twisted cable that hangs above the Judge's chair.

Watch one of them as he is summoned into Court. The cold Gothic formality of the place seems to have become permeated by an atmosphere of salt and seaweed. An enlarged chart hangs down upon the wall; the cordage by which the tall windows are opened and shut is looped round stanchions like halyards from the rigging; the single lamp on the Judge's table glows in the gathering dusk like a binnacle light; the raised Bench with its oaken steps and handrail suggests the quarter-deck of an "old-timer," and one almost expects to see a wheel in the witness-box were it not that the outgoing witness, who is clearly being "relieved" in more senses than one, is so obviously an engineer, despite his shore-going "slops." For he descends the steps as though they were those of the ladder in the engine-room hatch, nervously wiping his gnarled fingers with an imaginary piece of cotton-waste. Below the Bench rests in its brackets the Silver Oar, official symbol of the Admiralty jurisdiction; and facing it is placed a sloping board marked with the mariners' compass and having upon it two diminutive modelships indicating the position, as adduced in evidence, of the vessels whose collision is the subject of the action.

Judge and counsel vary in appearance not at all from those in other Courts, but by his Lordship's side sit his two naval assessors, resplendent in the blue and gold uniform of Elder Brethren of the

Trinity House, whose faces bear as visible an imprint of their calling as that of the incoming witness and his mate in the corridor;—three sailors marooned in a Court full of landsmen.

The burly “shellback” is piloted to the box by the little Usher, like a 5000-ton freighter in tow of a Mersey tug. After a quick look round, as at his next astern, or to make quick diagnosis of the weather, he repeats the words of the oath in a deep-sea bass more often used to hail the lookout-man for’ard in the chains than to answer the suave though highly technical questions of learned counsel.

Not long ago a witness of this type amusingly emphasized the exclusive jurisdiction of the Court by misreading the initial wording of the oath. “I swear by the *Admiralty* Gawd——!” so he declaimed in a voice capable of being heard as far as Blackwall Reach. And they declare that not a smile varied the chart-room corrugations upon the faces of the Trinity Masters! For these authorities on navigation enjoy an undeserved reputation for lack of humour and for blankness of expression, and their countenances have more than once been likened to those of ships’ chronometers. But, on an occasion now historical, one of them was actually heard to laugh aloud. It was during the hearing of a case of more than ordinary dullness and stiff with the technicalities of charter-parties and bills-of-lading, when it happened that a certain somnolent “silk” was roused by his watchful Junior just as the Judge inquired of a merchant

skipper giving evidence, "What was your cargo?" "I think it was dates, my Lord," was the "old man's" answer. "A-ha!" ejaculated the half-awakened leader, who had missed the question and only caught the final words of the reply. "Dates! Most important! Now, I warn you, Captain, *I shall make a careful note of every one!*"

And so the case proceeds, and some such scene may be witnessed daily at the "Sign of the Foul Anchor," where suits of but little interest to a sensation-loving public, but which involve great interests and vast sums of money, are tried by a tribunal whose decisions are respected and upheld in every port and ocean where the Red Ensign flies.

CHELSEA

“ANY OLD IRON?”

“*ANY old iron! Any o—o—ld iron!*”

A raucous-voiced street trader, whose veritable “walk” in life it is to buy unusable and decayed ironmongery, rouses the fog-choked echoes of my street on every Monday morning with this dismal canticle, and sets me musing on the change the centuries have brought about in the street-cries of London; the present dissonance of which has apparently moved the L.C.C. to call for evidence from local Councils on the point as to whether they should not be prohibited as “nuisances.”

Wheatley, a set of whose well-known engravings flanks the window through which is visible the author of so discordant and degenerate a slogan, immortalized in these plates the picturesqueness of his 18th-century prototypes; just as, some hundred years before, Orlando Gibbons,—a contemporary of Shakespeare’s,—and John Cobb, organist of the Chapel Royal, had perpetuated the harmonies of their cries.

But in this, as in other respects, beauty and melody have both vanished from our streets, and “*Co—al!*” “*Fi—ne ra—bbits!*” and “*Any knives or scissors to gr—ind!*” are but degraded substitutes for such melodious quaintnesses as:—

*A Cooper am I, and have been long,
And hooping is my trade,
And married am I to as beautiful
A wench as God ever made!*

Or:—
*Have you any boots, mayds?
Or have you any shoon?
Or an old pair of buskins
For all my greene broome?*

And the authorities of the Dental Register have long ago killed the *solfeccio* of the itinerant dentist, whose chant of—

*Touch and goe ! Touch and goe !
Have ye any work for Kindheart the Toothdrawer ?*

brought the bob-wigged bucks and powdered dames of Wheatley's time hurrying out-of-doors gratefully to submit to extractions, no doubt far from painless, upon their doorsteps.

Even unemployed women-servants (such beings existed in the good old days !) appealed for work with a hymn-like and pathetic ditty,—

*Gracious folk, have pity for the Lord's sake on us poor women,
Who lie, cold and comfortless night and day, in the deep dungeon !*

Abroad, however, and especially in Italy, the motherland of music, the street vendor still contrives to be both picturesque and tuneful; and some of the *Bociatori* of Naples and Florence might still inspire a Wheatley or a Gibbons.

The Neapolitan fruit-woman, for instance, who executes a tee-to-tum dance, balancing on her head her basket of ripe mulberries as she sings—*"Che belle cose ! Che belle cose !"* (What beautiful things !) ; seeming to be,—like the fig-sellers, with their alluring cry of *"Ma, che fico ! Ma, come sono !"* (What a fig ! How lovely they are !),—quite lost in ecstatic admiration of her own stock-in-trade.

And then there is the Florentine cherry-seller who thus exhorts her little patrons to buy,—

"Weep, children, weep! for I have cherries!" evidently with the hope that their tears will move distracted parents to purchase largely of her consoling wares.

While Italian street melodies are chiefly produced by the hawkers of fruit,—and it is noteworthy, in this connection, that the original London costermongers were vendors of "costard" apples,—in Spain it is fish that chiefly conjures music from its merchants. "*Sa—ar—dinas yescom-bros!*" chant the sellers of sardines and mackerel in the streets of San Sebastian; and in the poorer quarters of the town, "*Marisc—o!*" (Shell-fish!)

An admirable system of municipal markets has everywhere in France silenced the harmony of the hawkers; though in many a Normandy town you still may hear some old wandering craftsman, his apparatus in a basket on his back, piping upon a flageolet the wistful cadence of what seem like the opening bars of the old *canzonet* "*Le Bon Roi Dagobert,*" and then proclaiming in a shrill falsetto his readiness to repair "*ombrelles et parapluies!*"

In London, however, the yelping announcement of "All the Winners" by some shambling urchin sucking a villainous cigarette, and the dolefully uninterpretable ditties of gangs of workless (or work-shy) nondescripts, as well as the bellowing of the dealers in old iron and rabbit-skins, have banished for ever from our streets the softer melodies of a forgotten past when London was truly "brighter."

A SONG IN THE NIGHT

*I walked alone and thinking,
And faint the night wind blew
And stirred on mounds at crossways
The flower of sinner's rue.*

THE song, amazingly enough, is a setting of some verses of A. E. Housman's to an accompaniment that somehow seems *impromptu*; and the singer, a figure of cool and almost wistful slenderness in the sullen brooding of this August Sunday night, stands beside her accompanist, half-hidden by the dense shadows of the heavy-foliaged trees which overhang the garden railings of the little Chelsea square, obliterating in a merciful darkness the warning printed on a pendant notice-board—STREET MUSIC IS PROHIBITED.

In the star-strewn sky, sombre and thickening clouds—driven by fitful puffs of sultry wind—drift menacingly across a wan tempestuous moon like moods across the face of a woman on the verge of tears; and the air, tainted with the stifling exhalations of a London summer, is moist and oppressive with the threat of thunder.

The listless yellow rays of the street-lamps seem to palpitate with expectation of the cooling rain, and the singer's face looks vague and ghostly in the grotesque tracery of shadow which they combine with a capricious moonlight to throw on the thirsty roadway, investing her features with the mystic spirituality of a Madonna in the *cinquecento* altar-piece of some Italian church,

etiolated by the smoke of a thousand censers and dim with the dust of centuries.

Irresolute gusts of wind rustle the branches now and then, and though their tepid breath can scarcely move the faint homely vapours that wreath the chimney-pots, they seem to carry a welcome draught of freshness, like lukewarm water to the lips of a fevered patient.

The Square is still awake, as if reluctant to face the prospect of unrest through hours of sweltering darkness: and in the owl-light the architectural meanness of the drab brick houses is softened to a romantic indistinctness. Most of the lower windows are wide open, and here and there lounging figures, male and female, are sharply silhouetted against the bright orange of lighted interiors, from which ring out occasional crackles of talk and laughter and the hoarse cacophony of gramophones and "loud speakers."

Her body motionless in its frayed skirt and faded jumper, the singer stands in the *penumbra* of the trees as though unconscious of her surroundings; and close to her, but plunged in an obscurity so deep that it makes you wonder how he can see the keys, her accompanist sits on a camp-stool before his portable harmonium.

A bleak, grey-haired old man, with an unseasonable sniff that seems symptomatic rather of a soured mentality than a chronic cold, you can just distinguish the curve of his bony nose and the gnarled knuckles of hands whose trembling fingers yet manage to extract from the instrument a

wheezy but subdued accompaniment, which serves to emphasize, at any rate by contrast, the sweetness and purity of the singer's voice.

*Where the roads part they bury
Him that his own hand slays,
And so the weed of sorrow
Springs at the four cross ways.*

The woman's finely-chiselled features seem drawn with fatigue and haggard with the traces of suffering. Her delicately-moulded mouth shows sensitiveness and courage and a sort of proud humility; while her deep eyes, ringed with dark olive shadows, look up from beneath a broad serenity of brow, denoting intelligence, tempered by a more tender femininity that expresses itself in the wayward ripples of hair which escape at the sides from under her shabby hat.

A tremor of the lips is the only sign of emotion in her pale face, almost unearthly in its sad purity, from which her suppliant eyes look up and beyond the impervious parapet of roofs; but she enunciates the poignant words of the song with an intensity of utter earnestness, an expression almost precatory: as though the throbbing timbre of her voice were carrying a prayer in melody to Heaven, a lyrical entreaty for Divine compassion.

The clear vibrating tones of her soprano,—obviously untrained, but of an unmistakably pure and natural accuracy,—rise and fall in surging waves of sound and with a pitiful pathetic cadence, as though all the sorrowing spirits in a bitter world

were sighing together. It seems as though she were breathing-out, as from the secret places of a bruised heart, music that until now has lain dumb and unuttered within her, waiting for the pangs of suffering and passion to bring it into being.

*By night I plucked it bueless,
When morning broke 'twas blue :
Blue at my breast I fastened
The flower of sinner's rue.*

One by one the lighted windows fill with listeners, and one by one the gramophones are silenced, as the pure silvery voice grows in volume until it seems to fill the lowering immensity of the night with the artless insistence of its appeal ; and the fullness of its tone carries a subtle suggestion of linked orchestral harmonies : so that you can almost imagine among the shadows the fluttering fingers and quivering bows of violin-players, and sense from amid the rustling leafage the murmur of wood-wind and the swaying chords of muted brass, like muffled beatings in your listening ears.

And then a final echoing note of an infinite and consoling gentleness seems to pierce like a ray through the blackness of despair, like a beam of hope and pity through the darkness of the shadow of death.

*It seemed a herb of healing,
A balsam and a sign,
Flower of a heart whose trouble
Must have been worse than mine.*

The song is finished.

The listeners at the windows all are silent. Not a sound intrudes upon the singer's mystery of sorrow. No thunder of hands, no salvos of the glorious artillery of applause disturbs the simmering stillness. Until at last some woman giggles in a ground-floor window, and a fat man gasps and sneezes, and somebody bawls, "Hullo, how sickening! here comes the rain!" And then, in a sudden reaction of fatuous laughter, the listeners turn to wind their gramophones again and switch on their wireless; while from the open casements all round the Square the sharp synchronic chiming of hidden clocks announces the hour of Eleven, and, with a grunt of disappointment at the lack of any more tangible tokens of appreciation, the old accompanist folds his instrument and camp-stool in preparation for departure.

Then all at once, on the last stroke of the ruthless hammers, a servant-girl comes pattering breathlessly along the pavement; some insignificant little household drudge returning from a "Sunday out," spent, seemingly, in the country, for her arms are full of many-coloured flowers. And as she glimpses the singer still standing motionless beneath the trees just opposite the area-gates, she pauses, and with a glance of hasty sympathy, fumbles unhandily in what evidently proves an empty purse. Pink and embarrassed, she shyly crosses the road, and with a halting mumble of apology proffers the singer, in default of worthier tribute for the song that she can scarcely have heard, a tight-bound bunch of blossoms,—

redolent of some sunlit cottage-garden and blue as the skies above them at their gathering.

The muttering thunder-clouds obscure the moon, and heavy drops of rain like tears no longer restrainable, splash suddenly down onto the parched wood-paving, as, with a quick gesture of gratitude, the singer presses the posy to her face, and turning to follow her accompanist, is lost from view behind the impenetrable curtains of the night.

THE invitation cards went out ten days ago, with "*Pictures : 3 till 7*" neatly inscribed in the right-hand bottom corner.

The big studio has been tidied up; the clutter of paint-tubes and gallipots, of brushes and palettes and canvases, of all the tools and materials of an artist's craft that usually cover chairs and tables and overflow on to the floor, has disappeared. Drawing-room furniture has been introduced with elegant effect; flowers are everywhere; tobaccotins and hard-worked pipes of grateful sweetness but odour unspeakable have been swept into cupboards; unsaleable masterpieces meditate upon the damnability of modern taste with their faces to the wall; chalk and pencil "studies" have been replaced by tapestries and etchings; and every available easel holds framed and finished oil-paintings ready for sending in for next month's exhibitions. The place no longer wears the workman-like aspect of a *bottega*, but rather that of an immense boudoir or the lounge of some luxurious hotel; and by its ephemeral opulence suggests that the artist is a gentleman of leisure, who, amid these sumptuous surroundings, amuses himself by the production of casual masterpieces.

A crowd of fashionably-dressed people throngs all the floor-space: the ladies among them, with a prodigal revelation of neck and ankle, seem to be more interested in each other's frocks than in the paintings, of which their smartly-tailored male companions, intent on vapid conversation, are equally oblivious.

Beneath the light of the big north window a pretty actress poses her languid beauty with an abstracted smile, as though cloyed with the compliments of the romantic-faced young novelist at her side, to whom the contemplation of his own reflected image in the glazed pictures evidently affords a Narcissus-like self-satisfaction.

Three or four prosperous-looking "Philistines" grouped round the presentation portrait of one of their number, painted for the directorate of an Insurance Company,—and presumably to be paid for by grateful policy-holders,—gaze at it with an air of half-contemptuous condescension like that of the owner of a prize bull-terrier when asked to appraise the merits of a Pekinese.

Several picturesque young gentlemen, dissembling the ferment of their artistic appreciations under the supercilious cover of horn-rimmed glasses and side-whiskers, wander about proclaiming in strident tenor voices the latest shibboleths of pseudo-criticism.

A nondescript and rather grubby old man, who is in fact the most distinguished person in the room, peers myopically at the paintings and turns away abruptly from each one in turn with a censorious "Humph!"

The originals of the respective portraits are recognizable by an expression either of triumphant self-assurance, as though the success of the picture was predetermined by the self-sufficiency of the sitter, or of appealing resignation, as though

protesting "My dear, *of course*, a libel! yet I suppose the poor man did his best!"

The Artist's wife, prettily gowned, nervous, smiling, her normal anxious pallor masked by two unconvincing and inaccurately placed touches of rouge, murmurs continuously in a pleading breathless voice, "*How d'you do! Have you had tea?*" and kindred hospitable phrases.

The Artist, urbane, immaculately dressed, his beard elegantly trimmed—a very different being from the tousled resolute ruffian of his working hours, in paint-splashed smock and puffing a short pipe,—bows and grins, and shakes a multitude of hands with a mild air of deprecation.

Their children, whom the splendour of the scene—and illicit mouthfuls of unwonted confectionery—have reduced to an unprecedented silence, gaze down from the studio gallery upon the humming mass below; blissfully unconscious that the duration of their summer holiday and the payment of their school bills for the next twelve months may depend upon the tangible result of so much meretricious admiration; scraps of which, like coloured air-balloons at some fancy ball, float upwards to them:—"Vivid!—*what modelling! — Corot-like! — luminous! — what atmosphere!*"

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Outside, in the main thoroughfare round the corner of the narrow Chelsea street, an anæmic individual with draggled hair and a candidly

threadbare coat, works naïve and polychromatic wonders upon the pavement with his chalks ("All my own work"); while a small crowd of passers-by gazes enraptured, and working-men in corduroys and hob-nailed boots pause in their journeys homeward to drop into his hat their tribute to—
an Artist.

STRAW HATS IN FEBRUARY

BUNYAN, fast bound in the misery and iron of Bedford Gaol, indulged his desolate fancy by picturing the visionary horrors of the Valley of the Shadow; and, had he survived the intervening centuries to progress with me the other day on an evening pilgrimage down the King's Road, Chelsea, he might have witnessed there what almost seemed a realization of his sombre imagery.

For the sun's light had been obscured all day, and wreaths of fog shrouded a sodden street where dismal spectres stalked through clammy darkness. Tall ghostly female forms, all clad in the same sad uniform: their hair cut short as felons'; their shoulders shuddering beneath the pelts of apocryphal beasts; the movements of their apparently naked legs impeded by heels impracticably high; their heads imprisoned in domed helmets which almost hid wan faces, slashed with the disfiguring scarlet that smeared unsmiling lips; and haggard men, in dingy shapeless clothing and all monotonously hatted in the same amorphous felt. While, along the reeking roadway, loomed monstrous shapes of vehicles, lurid with misty lights and clangorous with hoots and groans like the immitigable lamentation of lost souls. (A Chelsea such as this goes far to explain the atrabilious tantrums of Carlyle!)

But all at once, in the uncanny glare of an open shop-front, I caught a glimpse of something that seemed in a flash to dissipate the gloom, to herald suddenly the hope of nascent spring, and to revive at once incongruous memories of a radiant past.

It was a white straw hat,—“Gent’s boater” is, I believe, the technical trade description,—or, to be accurate, two white straw hats; which, though perched on the heads of a fishmonger and his assistant in accordance with the queer sumptuary tradition of their calling, were haloed as with sunshine by the electric light, and served to send my fancy flying forward on incredulous wings to the winter’s end; and then, in a moment, backward on surer pinions to joyous recollections of departed summers. Straw hats! Dear antiquated headgear, fond vestiges of a pre-War and Saturnian Age! The sight of them stirred in my mind remembrances of how many thousands of their departed fellows! With round tops gleaming in the rays of suns longset, with crowns encircled by the blazonry of coveted ribands, Zingari, Guards, Free Foresters, M.C.C., dotting the dappled Thames at Henley, the tented sward at Canterbury, or the cool green of the July course at Newmarket! Flitting like mayflies to the Cam down Jesus Lane, or under the Cherwell’s trees at Parsons’ Pleasure: filling the Piccadilly hatshops with the promise of cream-dipped strawberries and salmon mayonnaise, to be shared with wasp-waisted and leg-o’-mutton-sleeved divinities,—each one of whom, though equally submissive to Fashion’s *fiat*, yet managed somehow to assert her individuality in her dress more definitely than any of her successors. For the “Golden Girls” of the ’nineties, conventional though they seemed to be, would have disdained to bend their heads like sheep to the

abhorred shears, or bare their backs to a mocking *mode* that fails to discriminate between sixteen and sixty or to differentiate the mistress from the maid, the particular from the "general." I even recalled the broad-brimmed "straw" that, like a paradoxical but prophetic symbol of Labour's future triumphs, used to crown John Burns's Right Honourable head at Westminster.

But, O my countrymen, what a falling off is there!—of straw hats, at any rate. The "Boater" has descended from the heads of "gents" to those of fishmongers; or barely survives as part of the academic dress of Wykehamists or Harrovians, on whom it appears as archaic as do the yellow stockings and belted habit on a Bluecoat boy. But, stiffly unaccommodating though it may have been, it yet retained both its own distinctiveness and the personality of its wearer. For it scorned the soulless sameness of the "Trilby" and seemed an emblem of our obsolete English spring in a way impossible to that misnamed headgear, whose sloppiness, like the post-War weather, is unaffected by the seasons.

But the relentless operation of 10 and 11 George V, Cap. 58* cut short my meditations in the murky drizzle. The vision faded, and once more I fell under the influence of the drear collectivist monotony of modern London, which, like its deadening fogs, reduces even the dress of its inhabitants to the lowest of common denominators;

* *The Shop-hours Act.*

to a droning level, as it were, of social syncopation, a flat convention of inhuman vorticism.

For my fishmongers, now wearing tedious "Trilbies," were closing the shutters preparatory to departure, leaving their "straws,"—pathetic relics of a bygone individualism—lying with appropriate irony on some shelf within.

CAMPDEN HILL

BERGOMASK

THERE is a studio on Campden Hill where lives and works an Artist whose genius stands in need of no such advertisement as is involved in the wearing of either whiskers or outlandish headgear; who might, in fact, from his appearance, be a mere average-adjuster or even a produce-broker, but who is none the less renowned among the *cognoscenti* both for his genius with the brush and for the *impromptu* hospitality which he so lavishly dispenses.

A ring on the telephone,—“We are dancing to-night: fancy-dress: come in your ordinary clothes, we can rig you up from the inexhaustible chest: be here at midnight”—and you know that at the witching hour prosaic worries and mundane preoccupations shall all be banished for you, and for a space you'll gain admission into a world enchanted.

The raw-boned studio, chilly and cheerless during working-hours, becomes then a dim-lit Palace of Romance from which has been magically excluded the squalid materialism of London. The floor is effulgent with beeswax, and all the clutter of an Artist's *batterie-de-peinture* has been hidden away.

Long candles in an old cut-glass chandelier—*minus* a dozen of its lustres—blend their limpid transfiguring light with that of shaded electric brackets on the walls, and of a dozen soft-hued Japanese lanterns which hang with some quaint rich-coloured banners from the rafters.

The great north window is veiled in faded but

beautiful curtains of opalescent brocade, while across the opposite door stands a six-fold Japanese screen of tawny-gold and black. Along the walls, with their dado of pinned-up "studies" in sanguine and water-colour, are set couches swathed in covers of deep-toned colourings; and from an old brazier in one corner is wafted the faint magic odour of smouldering sandal-wood. The big easel has been pushed into a shadowy embrasure, from which looks out, aloof and with an impassive disdain, the unfinished portrait of a beautiful woman. Opposite to it an open-lidded Bechstein Grand thrills to the masterly touch of a great musician whose very name can fill the Queen's Hall "to capacity," but who now, in the cap and *ruche* of Pierrot, and with a veteran briar pipe in full blast, plays for the dancers an amazingly syncopated adaptation of Stravinsky.

As the guests arrive, they pass to a huge Breton *armoire* full of studio "properties," and from its magic store array themselves as fancy may dictate.

Here is a dark-haired woman with palest ivory complexion and clad in a soft Chinese robe of black and saffron silk, its long wide sleeves revealing, as she raises them, her alabaster arms. The sombre beauty of her eyes, her mystic pallor, suggest the heroine of some palace-tragedy of old Pekin: in fact, she is the business manager of a lady's newspaper! There is a laughing tumble-haired girl dressed as Columбина out of a "Commedia dell' Arte," her face like a wind-blown blossom; but who is relating to her partner, as

they glide to the moaning lilt of the music, her efforts to interview an obdurately reticent statesman; she is a well-known lady journalist. That fat little man in an ill-fitting mask and domino with whom she dances, and whose prosaic complacency would seem to indicate Commerce and the City, is one of the most advanced of our young "modernist" painters. That sullen-eyed Apache-girl wearing a *béret* on her thick bobbed hair, and dancing with a young architect in all the bravery of an Indian chief, is an authority on East End baby clinics. Half the young "brains" of London are here to-night, their bodies transformed by the contents of the enchanted *armoire*, their spirits lightened by the subtle spirit of all-pervading Youth.

The music stops abruptly on a wild unfinished *crescendo*, and the dancers fling themselves chattering and breathless on to the seats, as a flight of brightly-coloured balloons soars upwards to the roof-beams. Suddenly, a slim girl all in black darts to the centre of the vacant floor, and in exquisite pantomime, half-gesture and half-dance, interprets a *Rigolo* of Satie's, brilliantly played for her by a rising politician whose fingers are as nimble as his tongue. She is followed by a young artist, who sings in a glorious ardent tenor a setting of De Musset's—

*Bonjour, Suzon, ma fleur des bois !
Es-tu toujours, la plus jolie ?—*

while by the door a late arrival, a melancholy-

looking little man who happens to be a Master-playwright, shyly adjusts to his face a grotesquely disproportionate false nose !

Then supper comes; ham-sandwiches, fruit, cakes, cocktails, and huge jugs of lemonade. Everyone smokes, and the resultant haze makes mysteries of the lights and blends the splashes of colour and the bizarre costumes into a dream-like mist. Presently a five-minute "Grand Guignol" thriller is played, in which a black-bearded desperado (in private life an Air-Commodore, R.A.F.) succeeds in murdering foully and in quick succession three ladies who, in the quite-forgotten outside world, are respectively a Magistrate, a writer of "best-sellers," and a Dame of the O.B.E.

And then the *Maestro-pierrot*, seating himself again at the piano, commences an *impromptu* which, as it develops, seems to embody and revive the very spirit of all the joyous gambols, caperings, sarabands, masques, and May-time revellings associated through the ages with the freshness of Youth and the gladness of resurgent summer. Instantly answering its call, as though instinctively obedient to some impelling and inherent summons that will not be denied, every man and every girl who happens to be garbed as Pierrot, Columбина, Harlequin, or Polichinella, springs forward and joins in a dance of clowns,—a veritable Bergomask. With a sort of improvised yet inevitable order, they trip it, in and out, up and down, winding and circling, faces alight, arms

akimbo, with lilting lips and rhythmic bodies : while the laughing maddening music ripples on, with the shrill sweetness of shepherds' fluting to skipping lambkins in sunny meadows, the soft appealing cadence of mandolins on the water of Venetian canals, the insistent throbbing of guitars at a Valencian *fiesta*, the very tone and melody of the pipes of Pan, and ends in a joyous farandole—a riotous, glorious, follow-my-leader jigging, instinct with memories of hautboy and tambour, maypole, and fluttering ribands,—such as the young Shakespeare might have danced on the green at Stratford when England still was “merrie.”

And so the magic fête goes on ; the guests,—celebrities and mediocrities alike,—providing their own entertainment with an equal and spontaneous joyousness : and the hours and the company grow smaller and smaller until, with a regretful yawn, the host turns out the lights and leaves the studio at last, smoke-wreathed and empty, in the chill tired silence that precedes the dawn.

ETHICS OF THE DUST

MRS. NAPWASH (yes, that really *is* her name) is a gaunt and gloomy female whose bony face wears an habitual expression of mingled ferocity and resignation. She suffers from a chronic snuffle and an unappeasable desire for confidential conversation, and she arrives every morning at my studio to—as she prefers to express it—“oblige me.” For Mrs. Napwash does not *work* for her employers: she “obliges” them. “My ’usban’,” she confided to me at our initial interview, “is on the County Council, an’ drawin’ good money; but, ’avin’ no children an’ not wantin’ time to ’ang ’eavy like, I goes out to *oblige* ladies, an’ bachelor gents like yourself, Sir.”

A momentary vision flashed before me of Mr. Napwash sitting absorbed in his mysterious municipal duties, beneath the domed and sculptured roof of the palatial edifice on the other side of Westminster Bridge. Or could she be inaccurate, and was he merely a *Borough* Councillor?

Anyhow, flattered by the prospect of having my breakfast cleared away and my rooms swept out by the partner of so much civic eminence, I accordingly assented to being “obliged” by Mrs. Napwash.

Obligation, according to the dictionary, is “the state of being indebted to anyone for a favour”; and that exactly describes my position with regard to Mrs. Napwash. The consciousness of being indebted to her for much enlightening conversation impels me to condone her devastating

breakages and her predatory incursions into my larder, decanters, and cigarette-box.

Armed with a duster and a carpet-sweeper (which, in her hands and in no one else's, develops a stridency comparable only with that of an electric concrete-breaker), she invariably arranges to commence her daily work in the room in which I happen at the moment to be busy. The husky sibilant ripple of her talk is punctuated by the screams of the misused machine; and ever, as I look around, I see at my elbow her grim assiduous figure, in a dingy *blooze*—the italics and the spelling are mine, the pronunciation is Mrs. Napwash's—and an apron which is a *pastiche* of irreconcilable materials.

One peculiarity about her is her whim of wearing queer oddments of incongruous frippery in conspicuous places on her person. Her lank untended locks are sometimes surmounted by what was once a handsome Spanish comb—now minus most of its teeth; her apron often burgeons with a variety of tarnished brooches, and a drooping circlet of grubby but authentic lace has more than once surrounded her throat. Moreover, she frequently stalks about the passages in an odd pair of down-at-heel shoes, originally expensive; and the other morning I found her scrubbing the passage with what appeared to be a string of lustrous pearls dangling round her neck.

"I sees you squintin' at 'em," she remarked in her rich contemptuous contralto; "*some* beads, I

don't think ! An' who knows but what they mayn't be real? But I expects they're fakes. An' I may as well tell yer where they come from. Yer see, Sir, my 'usban's a dust-sorter."

"Your husband's a *what*, Mrs. Napwash?" was my perplexed inquiry.

"A dust-sorter, Sir," reiterated the bedizened creature, scrubbing lustily, "employed by the Council, down at the canal bank. 'E looks after the sortin' of the stuff when they tips it into the barges what takes it away."

Light suddenly illuminated the dark places of my understanding; my dim notion of a Mr. Napwash resplendent with an aureole of official magnificence dwindled and faded before the stark realism of this thumb-nail sketch of the actual man groping for treasure-trove among the litter of London. The ambiguous origins of Mrs. Napwash's rusty embellishments began to disclose themselves as she continued her saga of the refuse-heaps.

"My 'usban'," she went on, "found these 'ere pearls among the rubbish, wrop up in a screw of paper. 'E often brings me things like that . . . old photographs in frames, an' satin shoes an' such like . . . the kitchen at 'ome's 'ung round with things 'e's picked out of the dust. 'E 'as better luck, mind yer, than 'e used to 'ave before these 'ere sanitary dustbins become fashionable; 'cos in the ole days the dustmen 'ad to rake the stuff out of wooden bins an' that, and they 'ad the first pick, as you might say; but now they 'as to empty

the tins straight into the carts, without no time to look the rubbish over, and so my 'usban' gets 'is chance down at the canal-side; not but what 'e doesn't go shares with the bargemen, o' course.

"You'd be surprised at the things 'e finds—'is 'perks,' 'e calls 'em. It's a rare excitin' life, a dust-sorter's; like one of these 'ere ballotteries, but without the five-bob ticket: you never know what a lucky chance 'll bring you. Once 'e found a gold sovering. 'E didn't give me *that*, though, for I never found out about it till I 'ad to go down to the 'Bird-in-the-'and' an' bring him 'ome at closing-time. It's not one of yer kid-glove jobs, I grant yer, but it's none so dusty all the same. 'Dust to dust,' as the parson says, and that's as maybe; but it brings in good money one way an' another. I shall sell these 'ere jools when I gets tired of 'em, an' buy one of them vanity-bags. But there, I'm not one of them as can sit all day twiddlin' their thumbs in silks an' satins, an' that's why I goes out to 'oblige.' An' now, if you don't want me no more, Sir, I'll be trottin' off 'ome; 'oo knows but what my 'usban' mayn't 'ave found another string o' pearls?"

And, with a final percussion of pails and brooms and scrubbing-gear, she clattered off down the passage.

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Whenever now I see a dust-cart passing with its malodorous cargo, I meditate on this proud City—

the heart of our great Empire—whose four million inhabitants provide each week, under pains and penalties, a vast mass of material from which the husband of Mrs. Napwash may deign to select adornments for her person !

REQUIEM

I

THE little old Spanish gentleman is dead.

On the slopes of Campden Hill, most westerly of London's seven unnoticed hills, there stands a little street of small "William-and-Mary" houses, contemporaries of the neighbouring palace, and perpetuating with the same suggestion that fragrant early 18th-century atmosphere with which the relics of old Kensington still seem imbued.

It leads out from a road of more pretentious "modern residences," and seems, after a distance of some fifty yards or so, to have lost heart as a thoroughfare, and, with an old-maidish timidity, to have shrunk into a mere passage-way between two high walls of ancient rosy brick, overhung with spreading greenery. These are the garden-walls of two of the old houses which, encircled by their lawns and shrubberies dotted with groups of elms and chestnut-trees, make Campden Hill still rural, and soften to a distant droning the raucous clamour of the two great arteries of traffic which are its northern and southern boundaries.

A tiny garden, set with bright-hued flowers and intersected by an uneven red-brick path, separates the little house from the street. The neat front-door, seldom seen open, and the six prim windows—the lowest barred, with singular appropriateness, by curved iron *rejas* in the Spanish fashion—seem, however dull the day, always to reflect a demurely smiling sunshine.

Behind the house there lies another little garden, with nut-trees and high vine-covered walls.

Here, for the last quarter of a century, has lived the little old Spanish gentleman, who now lies inert in the calm immobility of death, within the small, darkened, first-floor bedroom. During all that time he had been a familiar figure in the neighbourhood, in which he first arrived in 1896 or thereabouts, accompanied by his invalid wife, six cages of canaries, a little dog, and an old woman-servant. He and his wife knew no one, and seemed by their mode of life not so much to repel acquaintances as courteously to request that they might be left alone.

From the first they lived a life of uneventful seclusion, interrupted only by the death of the poor señora within four years of their arrival. Her small pathetic coffin was borne away in an unostentatious hearse drawn by a single horse, and followed by her husband and the old servant in a cab.

After her funeral things went on as before, and the dwindling stream of the old Spanish gentleman's life trickled on in its accustomed channel; though, as he told my friend the doctor, he had lost a jewel brighter than any in the Apocalypse.

II

He was very old—certainly nearly ninety—very deaf, and very small; yet the trim erectness of his figure and his dignity of countenance and carriage

seemed to add cubits to his stature, and to subtract at least a lustrum from his age. His face, of a smooth olive pallor and with regular features, looked lean and dark within its frame of dazzling silver hair, drooping moustaches, and neat Velasquez beard; and from beneath the deeper contrast of his jet-black eyebrows his old unsmiling eyes looked out with an inscrutable melancholy stare, as though they strove to pierce a veil which had been drawn across all memories and hopes.

He wore a hat of soft black felt or else a *Boina* (the Biscayan bonnet); and his clothes, sombre in colour as became a *caballero* of the old school, were always of a scrupulous correctness. A long, thin, black cigar was ever between his lips, and his conduct of an umbrella or a walking-stick was as though it had been a "clouded cane."

He took the air twice daily, walking the streets and roads of Campden Hill slowly and without movement of his head, in a sort of ambulatory trance, and humming a vague little tune like a *Malagueña*, his small dog at his heels.

On summer evenings he would sit in his little garden in a high-backed leathern chair, smoking and reading, surrounded by the cages of his six sweet-voiced canaries, which hung from the trees, the eaves of the small veranda, or from anything convenient, as in the *patio* of a Castilian house; and when darkness fell he would carefully cover up the birds and take them in.

Twice a week, and every Sunday morning, he attended Mass at the Church of the Carmelites,

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which stood near by, or at Our Lady of Victories in Kensington High Street. Every morning he bought the *Times* at the little paper-and-tobacco shop in an adjacent street, and in the late afternoon an evening paper; for which he asked the woman of the shop in stumbling broken English, but with a gesture such as might be used by one who craved a guerdon of a queen. Each Saturday the postman delivered a roll of Spanish newspapers—*La Epoca*, *El Nacional*, *El Correo Español*, and others; you could glimpse the bold, black foreign print of the titles, chequered with Spanish stamps.

He rarely went away, seeming to find on Campden Hill all that was necessary for his hermit-like existence. Nor had he any visitors, save now and then a Carmelite father, and after the señora's death, some ladies very fashionably dressed, who clattered up in carriages; one of which would seem, from the colours on the servants' cockades and its emblazoned panels, to have come from the Spanish Embassy. The only friend he made was the doctor whom he had called in for his wife's last illness, and who was afterwards to attend him in his own. To him he confided the details of his history, which, after his patient's death, the doctor told to me.

III

Esteban Maria Diego Salvador, Duque de Vargas, Conde de Agreda, "Grande de España, Gentile hombre de Casa y boca"—so ran his

name and titles. A Grandee of Spain of immemorial Castilian descent, a Madrileño born, his father had died while he was yet a child, and his mother when he was seventeen years old. As a young man he had had his way with life, and had been credited with many amorous adventures, and, no doubt, at least had had his turn at tinkling a guitar and whispering passionately through the bars of iron-grated windows. A "*pollo*"—"blood," or, in our more trivial Georgian vernacular, a "knot,"—a bright star in the dazzling firmament of young, well-born and wealthy fashionables of Madrid in the 'sixties, he had gradually become, from lack, perhaps, of something else to do, involved in the political disturbances which then distracted Spain. A friend and adherent of Prim, the great Catalan dictator, victor of Alcoléa—

*En el Puente de Alcoléa
La batalla ganó Prim—*

he had participated in all that led to the flight of Queen Isabel in 1863, and was a supporter of Amadeo of Savoy in '70. Disgusted at the anarchy which followed the failure of that disillusioned prince who scorned to "wear a crown on sufferance," he had impulsively thrown in his lot with the Carlists, and by so doing effected his own political and financial ruin. When Campos had induced the young Alfonso to exchange a cadetship at Sandhurst for the unenviable throne of Spain, our Carlist fled across the Pyrenees,

finding a refuge at St. Jean-de-Luz, and since that time has never seen his native land again.

To the doctor he would talk for hours in a quaint jargon of broken English and Castilian, of all his memories of those far-off stirring days : of Espartero and Narvaez, and of O'Donnell, Duke of Tetuan ; of Isabel " la Piadosa " and her Camarilla ; of Pronunciamientos, Convenios, and all the corrupt hell-broth of Spanish political intrigue. Also, he took pleasure in describing the antique ceremonial of the Spanish Court ; the Montero bodyguard—in which his cousin was an officer—those stately sentries, pacing the ante-room of the royal bedchamber in silent vigil through the night ; and how he had driven to the *besamanos*, or royal audience, in a state coach drawn by eight horses with ostrich plumes tossing on the fillets of their headstalls ; and how the halberdiers would clang their pike-butts in salute as he passed to the Antecamara, which those of his high degree alone were privileged to enter—a Grandee of Spain. And the recital would conclude with an expressive gesture of the delicate hand and with a sigh : "And so, Señor—to this little house, upon your Campden 'ill !" *Quantum mutatus ab illo !*

IV

Then to this exile for a hopeless cause had come his life's romance.

At Pau, in the early 'eighties, he had married a homely Englishwoman, whom he had met there

in a *pension*. She was of gentle birth, an orphan, no longer young, and with a little capital in home-railway stock. Neither pretty nor clever, she was but sweet-natured, quiet, and practically-minded. Which of those qualities in her attracted him, God knows; but he outpoured upon her all the intense, almost fanatical devotion of an ardent nature, chagrined and embittered by its disappointments, and no doubt slightly unhinged by too generous a measure of misfortune. On her side, she appears to have reciprocated it in her consoling, unimaginative way; at any rate, these two incongruously-mated lovers had been devoted to each other, and spent some blissful years in little Pyrenean towns—Guétharry, Argelès, St. Jean Pied-de-Port—distilling draughts of mutual happiness, their souls harmonious as the morning stars.

Suddenly came her illness, which had left her, after many months of suffering, hopelessly paralysed. She wished to die in England; so they came, and with their small savings bought the house on Campden Hill. All his ambition and joy in living gone, and with old age creeping on, thenceforward he devoted every energy that was left to tending her. He waited on her literally by day and night, while an old servant whom she had discovered looked to the house and cooking, and helped her master nurse.

When the blow fell at last, and the dark angel with severing sword had dubbed him widower, obstinate and inconsolable in his grief, he re-

ligiously preserved the same arrangement of every detail of the household as had existed in the lifetime of his wife; hugging his chains of agonizing memories. Her very work-box lay as she had left it; for, though a cripple, her hands and arms were unaffected, and she had spent the long, quiet days in knitting, her only practicable occupation, a soothing anodyne of all her suffering. Her little dog was tended as its dead mistress would have wished; and when, in turn, it died, another one appeared, identical to every seeming, and procured at Heaven knows what pains of search and of selection.

So the little Spanish gentleman's life went on, year after year, unaltered in its grief-stricken routine—nothing changed outwardly, nothing forgotten; and old age swallowed up his life gradually, remorselessly, and with the assured deliberation of some deadly reptile absorbing its powerless victim.

V

And now, at last, the old man, in his turn, has gone. Death came to him quietly in his sleep, a gentle euthanasia; and the old servant-woman, who had waited on him so long and faithfully, the other morning found him dead in bed, his thin fingers folded upon his breast, clasping his rosary; his features calm, as those of one who has at last dissolved the mysterious uncertainties of death. And at the bed-foot sat the little dog, with an air of easy insolence, as though triumphing in the fact

that a lower animal, burdened for years with every symptom of extreme senility, had yet, by some caprice of Providence, been suffered to outlive its master.

Her service terminated, the old retainer has now no further task than to lay out the poor attenuated shell, stretched pitifully between long lighted candles, on the bed in the little room with its vine-bordered windows, through which, piercing the chinks of the ill-fitting blinds, pale beams of languid London sunlight illuminate the faded Pietà over the mantelpiece, and the old dim daguerreotype that hangs beneath of a young man in Carlist uniform, his hair a youthful black, his left hand resting on his silver-hilted sword; while from their cages hanging in the room below, the six canaries sing his requiem.

He was a Grandee of Spain : may he sleep well in his last resting-place beneath the incongruous London clay that has obliterated so many kindred sorrows.

